



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2026-2027

BUILDING A STRONGER PRESTON COUNTY  
TOGETHER



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## *Preston County Economic Development Authority Strategic Plan 2026–2027*

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### **DOCUMENT STRUCTURE**

The Strategic Plan establishes PCEDA's direction and priorities, while the FY 2026–2027 Annual Work Program translates those priorities into specific actions, performance measures, and recurring organizational responsibilities.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Strategic Plan 2026–2027*

The Preston County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA) Strategic Plan 2026–2027 establishes a comprehensive framework for advancing economic development, strengthening communities, and improving the quality of life throughout Preston County. Developed through collaboration among the PCEDA Board of Directors, staff, local governments, businesses, community organizations, and regional partners, this plan identifies strategic priorities that respond to current economic conditions while positioning the county to capitalize on future opportunities. The Strategic Plan serves as both a guide for organizational decision-making and an implementation roadmap that aligns annual work programs with long-term economic development objectives.

Preston County possesses many of the characteristics that position it for continued economic growth and investment. Located along the Interstate 68 corridor between Morgantown and the greater Pittsburgh metropolitan area, the county offers excellent transportation access to major markets while maintaining the quality of life and natural beauty associated with rural Appalachia. The county benefits from available industrial land, expanding business parks, a strong manufacturing tradition, productive agricultural resources, nationally recognized outdoor recreation, and a collaborative network of partners working together to strengthen the local economy.

The County Assessment identified competitive advantages that provide a strong foundation for future development while also highlighting challenges including workforce shortages, housing availability, aging infrastructure, and increasing competition for business investment. The initiatives in this Strategic Plan were selected to respond to these needs while building upon the county's existing strengths.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### Short-Term Strategic Initiatives (1–2 Years)

- Develop a Build-Ready Industrial Site along the Interstate 68 Corridor.
- Expand Digital Marketing and Business Promotion through Professional Video Production.
- Determine the Feasibility of a Regional Workforce Training Center.
- Develop a Sustainable Funding Strategy for PCEDA.
- Monitor and Pursue Strategic Property Acquisition Opportunities.
- Increase Workforce Housing, Senior Housing, and Residential Development Opportunities.
- Expand Partnerships Supporting Tourism and Agritourism.

### Long-Term Strategic Initiatives (3–5 Years)

- Evaluate the Feasibility of a Year-Round Farmers Market.
- Explore Drone Training, Research, and Manufacturing Opportunities with Camp Dawson.
- Expand Business Education and Succession Planning through the Preston County Chamber of Commerce.
- Determine the Feasibility of a Preston County EDA Revolving Loan Fund.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased private-sector investment and quality employment.
- Expanded industrial and commercial development.
- Improved infrastructure and site readiness.

- Greater workforce and senior housing availability.
- Growth in entrepreneurship, tourism, and agritourism.
- Stronger workforce partnerships and leveraged grant funding.

## **MEASURING SUCCESS**

Progress will be evaluated annually through measurable performance indicators, Board review, and stakeholder engagement. Key metrics include jobs created and retained, private investment leveraged, grants secured, infrastructure projects completed, businesses assisted, housing opportunities facilitated, and partnerships developed.

This Strategic Plan represents the Preston County Economic Development Authority's commitment to proactive leadership, responsible stewardship of public resources, and strategic investment that strengthens communities, expands economic opportunity, and improves the quality of life for current and future generations.

# COUNTY ASSESSMENT

## *Understanding Preston County's Economic Position*

The County Assessment provides the economic and demographic foundation for the Preston County EDA Strategic Plan. It reviews population, educational attainment, income, employment, industry composition, labor force, and housing conditions and compares Preston County with other West Virginia counties where source data provide a state ranking. These indicators help identify the county's competitive strengths, structural challenges, and areas where focused economic development activity can have the greatest impact.

|                              |                 |                        |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 2024 Population              | <b>34,004</b>   | 15th in West Virginia  |
| 2025 Covered Employment      | <b>7,312</b>    | Average wage: \$57,998 |
| 2024 Median Household Income | <b>\$63,370</b> | 11th in West Virginia  |

### Economic and Demographic Overview

| Indicator                               | Preston County | State Rank |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Population (2024)                       | 34,004         | 15         |
| Growth since 2020 Census                | -0.6%          | 12         |
| Households (2024)                       | 12,809         | 17         |
| Labor Force (2025 annual average)       | 14,036         | 15         |
| Unemployment Rate (2025 annual average) | 4.2%           | 37         |
| Per Capita Personal Income (2024)       | \$46,260       | 41         |
| Median Household Income (2024)          | \$63,370       | 11         |
| Poverty Rate (2024)                     | 15.4%          | 37         |
| High School Diploma or More (25+, 2024) | 86.2%          | 38         |
| Bachelor's Degree or More (25+, 2024)   | 17.5%          | 32         |

Preston County's 2024 population is 34,004. While the county experienced a modest 0.6% decline from the 2020 Census, its longer-term population performance has been comparatively strong: population increased 16.6% from 2000 to 2020 while West Virginia's population declined 0.8% over the same period. The age profile, however, points to an aging population, with 20.5% of residents age 65 or older and a median age of 43.3.

### Population and Age

| Age Group           | Population | Share of County |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Preschool (0–4)     | 1,536      | 4.5%            |
| School Age (5–17)   | 4,568      | 13.4%           |
| College Age (18–24) | 2,225      | 6.5%            |
| Young Adult (25–44) | 9,672      | 28.3%           |
| Older Adult (45–64) | 9,173      | 26.9%           |
| Age 65+             | 6,986      | 20.5%           |

## Education and Workforce Preparation

Educational attainment presents both a workforce asset and a strategic challenge. A large share of adults have completed high school, but postsecondary degree attainment remains below national levels. In 2024, among residents age 25 and older 46.7% report a high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment, while 86.2% have earned at least a high school diploma, 11.2% held a bachelor's degree and 6.4% held a graduate, professional, or doctoral degree.

| Educational Attainment (Age 25+) | Preston County | U.S.  |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Less than 9th Grade              | 3.8%           | 4.7%  |
| 9th–12th Grade, No Diploma       | 10.0%          | 5.7%  |
| High School Graduate             | 46.7%          | 26.0% |
| Some College, No Degree          | 15.9%          | 19.1% |
| Associate Degree                 | 6.1%           | 8.8%  |
| Bachelor's Degree                | 11.2%          | 21.6% |
| Graduate/Professional/Doctorate  | 6.4%           | 14.1% |

## Income and Economic Well-Being

Household income has improved substantially over time. Median household income reached \$63,370 in 2024, ranking 11th among West Virginia counties and equaling 77.7% of the U.S. median. Per capita personal income was \$46,260, or 63.2% of the U.S. level. The county's 2024 poverty rate was 15.4%, while the child poverty rate was 19.0% in 2023.

| Measure                    | Current         | Comparison / Trend        |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Median Household Income    | \$63,370 (2024) | 11th in WV; 77.7% of U.S. |
| Per Capita Personal Income | \$46,260 (2024) | 41st in WV; 63.2% of U.S. |
| PCPI 10-Year Change        | 42.7%           | 1st in WV                 |
| Poverty Rate               | 15.4% (2024)    | 15.2% in 2000             |
| Child Poverty Rate         | 19.0% (2023)    | 21.5% in 2000             |

## Jobs, Wages and Industry Structure

Covered employment totaled 7,312 jobs in 2025, essentially unchanged from 7,293 jobs in 2015. The more significant change has been wage growth: average annual wages increased from \$37,044 in 2015 to \$57,998 in 2025, a 56.6% increase. The number of establishments also increased from 661 to 882 over the decade.

| Year           | Establishments | Covered Jobs | Average Wage |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2015           | 661            | 7,293        | \$37,044     |
| 2020           | 709            | 7,001        | \$43,332     |
| 2023           | 807            | 7,115        | \$50,989     |
| 2024           | 884            | 7,207        | \$55,402     |
| 2025           | 882            | 7,312        | \$57,998     |
| 10-Year Change | +221           | +19          | +\$20,954    |

Employment is distributed across several major sectors, reducing reliance on a single industry. Public administration, construction, and health care/social services each account for roughly 15% of covered employment. Manufacturing represents 8.8% of jobs and pays an average annual wage of \$64,833, while construction averages \$67,593.

| Industry                      | Jobs  | Share | Average Wage |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------|
| Public Administration         | 1,165 | 15.9% | \$88,863     |
| Construction                  | 1,106 | 15.1% | \$67,593     |
| Health Care & Social Services | 1,101 | 15.1% | \$53,825     |
| Retail Trade                  | 791   | 10.8% | \$30,811     |
| Manufacturing                 | 641   | 8.8%  | \$64,833     |
| Educational Services          | 537   | 7.3%  | \$48,166     |
| Accommodation & Food Services | 485   | 6.6%  | \$21,459     |
| Transportation & Warehousing  | 258   | 3.5%  | \$59,556     |

## Labor Force

The 2025 annual average labor force was 14,036, including 13,452 employed residents and 584 unemployed residents. The labor force declined 1.3% over five years and 2.2% over ten years, reinforcing the importance of workforce attraction, retention, training, and housing strategies. The annual average unemployment rate was 4.2%.

| Labor Force Measure | 2025   | 5-Year Change | 10-Year Change |
|---------------------|--------|---------------|----------------|
| Total Labor Force   | 14,036 | -1.3%         | -2.2%          |
| Employed            | 13,452 | +2.6%         | -0.3%          |
| Unemployed          | 584    | -47.1%        | -34.9%         |
| Unemployment Rate   | 4.2%   | -46.2%        | -31.1%         |

## Housing and Living Arrangements

Preston County had an estimated 15,183 housing units in 2024, of which 12,809 were occupied. Owner-occupied housing represented 68.7% of all units, while renter-occupied units represented 15.6%. The county also has a comparatively significant seasonal and recreational housing component, with 925 units, or 6.1% of the housing stock, used for seasonal or recreational purposes.

| Housing Measure           | Number | Share  |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| Total Housing Units       | 15,183 | 100.0% |
| Occupied                  | 12,809 | 84.4%  |
| Owner Occupied            | 10,438 | 68.7%  |
| Renter Occupied           | 2,371  | 15.6%  |
| Vacant                    | 2,374  | 15.6%  |
| Seasonal/Recreational Use | 925    | 6.1%   |

## Assessment Implications for Economic Development

The assessment indicates that Preston County enters the planning period with meaningful assets: long-term population resilience, comparatively strong household income, significant wage growth, a diversified employment base, and established strengths in construction, manufacturing, public administration, health care, and transportation. At the same time, the data identify issues that directly inform the Strategic Plan's priorities.

- Workforce availability is a constraint. The labor force has declined over both five- and ten-year periods even as unemployment has fallen.
- Postsecondary educational attainment remains below national levels, supporting continued emphasis on industry-driven training and workforce partnerships.

- The population is aging, strengthening the case for senior housing, senior living, health care, and succession-planning initiatives.
- Housing conditions warrant continued attention to workforce and senior housing availability as part of business attraction and retention.
- Strong wage growth and a diversified industry base provide a foundation for additional manufacturing, industrial, and emerging-technology investment.
- The county's seasonal and recreational housing presence supports continued development of tourism, outdoor recreation, and agritourism as complementary economic sectors.

### **Key Takeaway**

Preston County's strategic challenge is not simply to create growth, but to align industrial development, workforce, housing, infrastructure, business support, and quality-of-life investments so that the county can compete for new investment while retaining the businesses and residents already contributing to its economy.



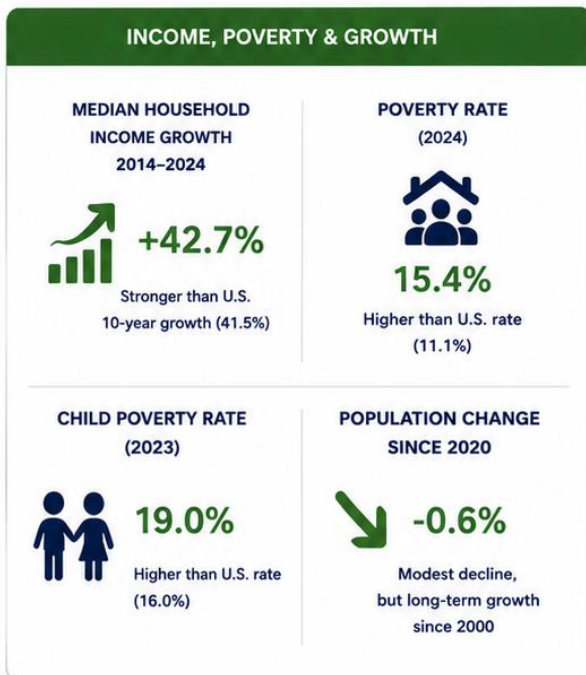
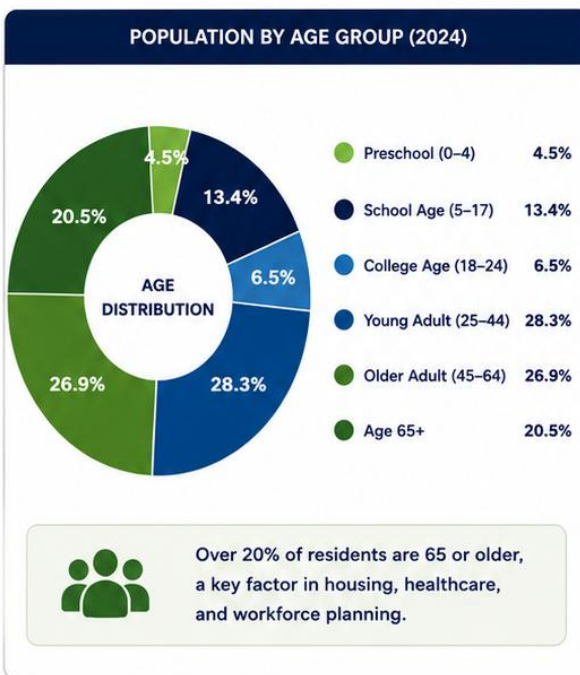
# PRESTON COUNTY

## — ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT —

Key Indicators of Our County's Economy



| POPULATION<br>(2024)                                                              | MEDIAN<br>HOUSEHOLD INCOME<br>(2024)                                              | LABOR FORCE<br>(2025)                                                             | UNEMPLOYMENT RATE<br>(2025 ANNUAL AVERAGE)                                        | PER CAPITA<br>PERSONAL INCOME<br>(2024)                                             | MEDIAN AGE<br>(2024)                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>34,004</b>                                                                     | <b>\$63,370</b>                                                                   | <b>14,036</b>                                                                     | <b>4.2%</b>                                                                       | <b>\$46,260</b>                                                                     | <b>43.3</b>                                                                         |
| 15th in West Virginia                                                             | 11th in West Virginia<br>77.7% of U.S. Median                                     | 15th in West Virginia                                                             | 37th in West Virginia                                                             | 41st in West Virginia<br>63.2% of U.S. Level                                        | An aging population:<br>20.5% age 65+                                               |



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (2020, 2024, 2025),  
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2025),  
American Community Survey (2024), JobsEQ (2025),  
WV Department of Commerce, and  
other West Virginia County Rankings.

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— Together —

# VISION & MISSION

## *Current Statements and Recommended Updates*

The following presents PCEDA's existing Vision and Mission statements alongside recommended updates developed for the Strategic Plan. The recommended language preserves the core intent of the original statements while presenting a broader, more forward-looking framework for economic development.

### VISION STATEMENT

#### VISION STATEMENT

**The Preston County Economic Development Authority envisions Preston County as one of West Virginia's premier locations for business investment, entrepreneurship, workforce opportunity, and sustainable economic growth, offering a high quality of life for residents while creating opportunities for future generations.**

# VISION & MISSION

*Mission Statement*

## MISSION STATEMENT

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Preston County Economic Development Authority's mission is to promote sustainable economic growth by creating and retaining quality jobs, supporting the expansion of existing businesses, attracting new investment, improving critical infrastructure, fostering strategic partnerships, identifying emerging opportunities for economic diversification, and informing the public about initiatives that strengthen Preston County's economy and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

### FROM MISSION TO ACTION

| BUSINESS               | INFRASTRUCTURE      | PARTNERSHIPS     | OPPORTUNITY            |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Retention & investment | Capacity for growth | Shared resources | Jobs & quality of life |



# FROM ASSESSMENT TO STRATEGY

— CONNECTING OUR REALITIES TO OUR PRIORITIES —

The County Assessment identified key opportunities and challenges. These findings shaped our most important **1–2 year** strategic priorities.

## WHAT THE ASSESSMENT TOLD US



### STRATEGIC LOCATION

I-68 access and available industrial land give Preston County a strong competitive advantage.



### WORKFORCE SHORTAGE & SKILLS GAP

Employers struggle to find skilled workers; training and career pathways are needed.



### HOUSING CONSTRAINTS & AGING POPULATION

Limited housing supply and a growing 65+ population impact workforce and quality of life.



### TOURISM & AGRITOURISM OPPORTUNITY

Natural beauty and outdoor recreation offer strong potential to grow tourism and support local businesses.



### LIMITED LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES

Reliance on grants highlights the need for sustainable, flexible local funding.

## OUR 1–2 YEAR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (HIGHEST PRIORITY)



### DEVELOP A BUILD-READY INDUSTRIAL SITE

Create a market-ready site along the I-68 corridor to attract manufacturing and logistics investment.



### DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF A REGIONAL WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER

Build a strong pipeline of trained workers for current and future employers.



### INCREASE WORKFORCE HOUSING, SENIOR HOUSING & RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Expand housing options to support all life stages and strengthen community vitality.



### EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING TOURISM AND AGRITOURISM

Strengthen marketing, collaboration, and support for tourism and agritourism businesses and events.



### DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING STRATEGY FOR PCEDA

Create stable, local funding sources to support projects, initiatives, and operations.



STRATEGIC FOCUS. **STRONGER ECONOMY.**  
**BETTER COMMUNITIES. BRIGHTER FUTURE.**

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**PRESTON COUNTY**  
*Together*

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

*A collaborative framework for setting priorities, guiding implementation, and measuring progress*

The Preston County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA) uses a collaborative strategic planning process to establish organizational priorities, identify economic development opportunities and challenges, and translate long-term direction into an annual work program. The process is designed to ensure that the Authority's activities remain aligned with Preston County's economic conditions, community needs, available resources, and opportunities for public and private investment.

## Planning Approach

The Strategic Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving PCEDA staff, members of the Board of Directors, and key business and government leaders. As part of the process, PCEDA reviewed available demographic, workforce, income, employment, industry, education, and housing data to assess Preston County's economic position and identify issues that should inform future priorities.

The Executive Committee developed an initial set of goals and objectives for consideration. These priorities were then presented to the full Board of Directors for discussion, revision, and review. The final strategic initiatives reflect both near-term actions that can be advanced within one to two years and longer-term opportunities that may require three to five years of development.

## Core Components of the Planning Process

| STEP | COMPONENT                       | PURPOSE                                                                                                                         |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | County Assessment               | Review demographic and economic conditions, including labor force, income, education, employment, industry, and housing trends. |
| 2    | Key Issues and Opportunities    | Identify the principal challenges, competitive advantages, and emerging opportunities affecting Preston County's economy.       |
| 3    | Strategic Goals and Initiatives | Establish short- and long-term priorities, expected results, and measures of progress.                                          |
| 4    | Annual Work Program             | Translate strategic priorities into specific actions that can be implemented during the fiscal year.                            |
| 5    | Evaluation and Adjustment       | Review progress annually, assess results, and revise priorities as conditions, opportunities, and community needs change.       |

## Relationship to the Annual Work Program

The Strategic Plan establishes the broader direction of the Authority, while the Annual Work Program serves as the implementation tool for carrying that direction forward. Initiative Objectives identify new or time-limited priorities, while Maintenance Objectives capture recurring responsibilities that are essential to PCEDA's ongoing economic development role.

This structure allows the Board to maintain long-term continuity while adjusting annual activities to reflect project status, funding availability, and changing economic conditions.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

PCEDA's planning process is strengthened through participation and coordination with organizations that influence economic development throughout Preston County. These include local governments, businesses, utilities, educational institutions, workforce organizations, tourism and agricultural partners, regional development organizations, and state agencies. Stakeholder input helps the Authority identify practical implementation opportunities, avoid duplication, and leverage outside expertise and funding.

### **Annual Evaluation Process**

Prior to each annual strategic planning cycle, PCEDA staff will review the Annual Work Program and document progress on both initiative and maintenance objectives. The results will be provided to the Board of Directors before the strategic planning session so members can evaluate accomplishments, identify unfinished or emerging priorities, and determine whether existing objectives should be continued, revised, completed, or replaced. This annual review keeps the Strategic Plan current and responsive. It also provides a consistent framework for evaluating organizational performance, aligning budget and staff resources with strategic priorities, and demonstrating accountability to the Board, funding agencies, partner organizations, and the public.

### **Planning Principle**

**The Strategic Plan is intended to function as a living management document—not a static report. Its value depends on regular review, measurable implementation, and the Authority's willingness to adjust priorities as Preston County's economic environment changes.**



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

*Building the foundation for investment,  
jobs, and long-term economic growth.*



## 1-2 YEAR PRIORITIES



### 1 BUILD-READY INDUSTRIAL SITE

Prepare a premier I-68 corridor site for development and new investment.



### 2 DIGITAL MARKETING & BUSINESS PROMOTION

Expand outreach and professional marketing to attract businesses, talent, and visitors.



### 3 WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER FEASIBILITY

Determine feasibility of a regional training center to strengthen our workforce pipeline.



### 4 SUSTAINABLE FUNDING STRATEGY

Identify and implement sustainable revenue sources for PCEDA operations and future initiatives.



### 5 STRATEGIC PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS

Monitor and pursue strategic property opportunities to expand our development portfolio.



### 6 HOUSING & SENIOR LIVING DEVELOPMENT

Increase workforce housing, senior housing, and residential development opportunities.



### 7 TOURISM & AGRITOURISM PARTNERSHIPS

Expand partnerships that enhance tourism, agritourism, and outdoor recreation experiences.

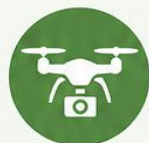


## 3-5 YEAR PRIORITIES



### 1 YEAR-ROUND FARMERS MARKET FEASIBILITY

Evaluate the feasibility and community benefits of a year-round farmers market.



### 2 DRONE TRAINING, RESEARCH & MANUFACTURING OPPORTUNITIES

Explore opportunities with Camp Dawson for training, research, and advanced manufacturing.



### 3 BUSINESS EDUCATION & SUCCESSION PLANNING

Expand business education and succession planning through partnerships with the Preston County Chamber of Commerce.



### 4 PCEDA REVOLVING LOAN FUND FEASIBILITY

Determine feasibility of a revolving loan fund to increase access to capital for local businesses.

## FOCUSED ON FOUR OVERARCHING RESULTS



### BUSINESS INVESTMENT

Attract and expand businesses through site readiness, strategic marketing, and strong partnerships.



### JOBS & WORKFORCE

Grow quality jobs by strengthening our workforce, training opportunities, and supporting employers.



### COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Invest in infrastructure, housing, and amenities that enhance quality of life and support sustainable growth.



### ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Build a resilient economy by growing key sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and technology.



**Strong Partnerships. Strategic Investments. Lasting Impact.**  
*Building a prosperous future for Preston County.*

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## 1–2 YEAR OVERVIEW

The Preston County Economic Development Authority's 1–2 Year Strategic Initiatives focus on actions that can produce measurable progress in the near term while building the foundation for sustained economic growth. The seven initiatives respond directly to priorities identified through the County Assessment, including the need for additional development-ready property, workforce capacity, housing, organizational sustainability, stronger marketing, and continued economic diversification.

Together, these initiatives represent a balanced economic development strategy. PCEDA will work to increase Preston County's readiness for new business investment by developing a build-ready industrial site along the Interstate 68 corridor and identifying additional strategic property opportunities. At the same time, enhanced digital marketing and business promotion will strengthen the county's visibility among prospective businesses, site selectors, residents, visitors, and other target audiences.

The initiatives also recognize that successful business attraction and retention depend on more than available sites. PCEDA will evaluate the feasibility of a regional workforce training center to better align workforce preparation with employer needs and will pursue opportunities to increase workforce housing, senior housing, and residential development. These efforts are intended to address factors that directly affect employers' ability to recruit and retain workers while responding to changing demographic and community needs.

Strengthening PCEDA's own capacity is another important component of the strategy. The Authority will pursue a sustainable funding strategy and continue evaluating strategic property acquisitions that can generate economic development opportunities, expand the county's inventory of marketable properties, and potentially provide recurring organizational revenue.

Finally, PCEDA will broaden its economic development partnerships by increasing collaboration around tourism and agritourism. Preston County's natural resources, outdoor recreation, agriculture, heritage, and rural character provide opportunities to support entrepreneurs, attract visitors, encourage additional spending within the county, and complement traditional industrial and business development efforts.

### THE SEVEN NEAR-TERM STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

01

#### **Build-Ready Industrial Site**

Advance the development of a strategically located site along the Interstate 68 corridor to improve Preston County's competitiveness for industrial and business recruitment.

02

#### **Digital Marketing & Business Promotion**

Expand the use of professional video and digital communications to showcase Preston County businesses, development sites, infrastructure investments, community assets, and quality of life.

03

#### **Regional Workforce Training Center**

Determine the feasibility of establishing a regional training center that responds to employer needs, addresses

identified workforce gaps, and coordinates existing education and training resources.

**04**

**Sustainable Funding Strategy**

Identify and develop sustainable revenue sources that strengthen PCEDA's long-term financial capacity and ability to undertake economic development projects and programs.

**05**

**Strategic Property Acquisition**

Monitor and evaluate opportunities to acquire industrial, commercial, and redevelopment properties that expand the county's inventory of marketable sites and buildings.

**06**

**Housing & Senior Living Development**

Increase opportunities for workforce housing, senior housing, and residential development while evaluating the feasibility of additional senior living options.

**07**

**Tourism & Agritourism Partnerships**

Strengthen partnerships that use Preston County's outdoor recreation, agriculture, heritage, and tourism assets to support business development, entrepreneurship, visitor spending, and economic diversification.

**These initiatives are intentionally interconnected. Sites and infrastructure create places for investment; workforce and housing provide the people and communities needed to support that investment; marketing communicates Preston County's opportunities; tourism and agritourism broaden the economic base; and sustainable funding and strategic property development strengthen PCEDA's capacity to continue this work. Collectively, the seven priorities establish a practical near-term agenda for advancing investment, job creation, business growth, and long-term economic resilience in Preston County.**

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## 3–5 YEAR OVERVIEW

The Preston County Economic Development Authority's 3–5 Year Strategic Initiatives focus on opportunities that require additional research, partnership development, market validation, or financial planning before full implementation. These initiatives complement the Authority's near-term priorities by positioning Preston County to diversify its economy, strengthen locally owned businesses, expand agricultural and technology-based opportunities, and develop new tools that support long-term business growth.

The long-term initiatives are intentionally exploratory. During the planning period, PCEDA will evaluate feasibility, identify appropriate partners, determine potential funding and operating models, and assess whether each opportunity can be implemented sustainably. Moving an initiative forward will depend on demonstrated demand, available resources, partner commitment, and its potential to generate meaningful economic benefits for Preston County.

A year-round farmers market could strengthen connections among agriculture, entrepreneurship, tourism, and local food systems while creating a consistent outlet for producers and small businesses. PCEDA will examine demand, location and facility options, operating models, partnerships, and financial sustainability before determining whether and how the concept should advance.

Emerging drone and unmanned aircraft system technologies present another opportunity for economic diversification. PCEDA will explore potential training, research, testing, maintenance, and manufacturing opportunities, including possible collaboration with Camp Dawson, educational institutions, workforce partners, and private industry.

PCEDA will also work with the Preston County Chamber of Commerce and other partners to strengthen business education, succession planning, estate planning, and strategies that encourage residents and visitors to spend more of their dollars within Preston County. At the same time, the Authority will evaluate whether a revolving loan fund could provide an effective financing tool for small businesses, entrepreneurs, expansions, and redevelopment projects.

## THE FOUR LONG-TERM STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

01

### **Year-Round Farmers Market**

Evaluate the feasibility of a sustainable year-round market that supports local agriculture, small businesses, food access, tourism, and community activity.

02

### **Drone / UAS Opportunities**

Explore drone training, research, testing, maintenance, and manufacturing opportunities, including potential collaboration with Camp Dawson and other public, educational, and private-sector partners.

03

### **Business Education & Succession Planning**

Partner with the Preston County Chamber of Commerce to expand business education, succession and estate planning resources, and strategies that encourage local spending and business continuity.

**Revolving Loan Fund**

Determine the feasibility, capitalization requirements, administration structure, eligible uses, and long-term sustainability of a PCEDA revolving loan fund for businesses, entrepreneurs, expansions, and redevelopment.

**LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PURPOSE**

These initiatives extend PCEDA's strategy beyond traditional business recruitment by cultivating local entrepreneurship, supporting business continuity, connecting agriculture and tourism, exploring emerging technology sectors, and evaluating new access-to-capital tools. The 3–5 year horizon gives the Authority time to test feasibility and build the partnerships necessary to advance only those opportunities that demonstrate long-term economic value and sustainability.

**FY 2026–2027**  
**ANNUAL WORK PROGRAM**  
Preston County Economic Development Authority

*Implementation framework for the 2026–2027 Strategic Plan*

## Annual Work Program

The FY 2026–2027 Annual Work Program translates the Preston County EDA Strategic Plan into specific actions for implementation. Objectives are organized as Initiative Objectives—new or time-limited priorities—and Maintenance Objectives—recurring responsibilities essential to PCEDA's ongoing economic development role. The action steps below have been streamlined to emphasize strategic outcomes while retaining the substantive work identified in the draft plan.

### INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES | ONE TO TWO YEARS

#### 1. Develop a Build-Ready Industrial Site off Interstate 68

**OBJECTIVE** Advance a controlled property toward build-ready status so it can be competitively marketed for industrial and business investment.

##### *Action Steps*

- Maintain site control through ownership or option agreements that permit completion of due diligence.
- Complete required due diligence and site assessments, including surveying, geotechnical work, environmental review, endangered species review, and wetland delineation as applicable.
- Prepare conceptual site design, if needed, addressing the build pad, truck and employee access, stormwater management, and utility corridors.
- Extend or improve industrial-grade access, water, sewer, electric, natural gas, and broadband infrastructure as needed to serve the site.
- Upon achieving build-ready status, prepare site-specific marketing materials and promote the property through WVDED, site selectors, the PCEDA website, and LOIS.

##### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Required due diligence completed.
- Conceptual site plan completed, if needed.
- Priority infrastructure improvements advanced.
- Site marketed through state and PCEDA business recruitment channels.

#### 2. Expand Digital Marketing & Business Promotion

**OBJECTIVE** Use short-form video and digital content to promote available sites, Preston County businesses, infrastructure investments, community assets, and quality of life.

##### *Action Steps*

- Define target audiences, communication goals, and core messages for the video initiative.
- Develop an annual content calendar featuring business spotlights, PCEDA projects, available properties, infrastructure, events, and quality-of-life assets.
- Establish a practical production process using staff, partners, or professional videography as appropriate, including required permissions and releases.

- Produce concise, branded videos using interviews, project visuals, property footage, community imagery, and drone footage when appropriate.
- Publish and distribute content through the PCEDA website, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, newsletters, partner channels, and other appropriate outlets.
- Track views, shares, comments, and other engagement measures and use results to refine future content.

#### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Annual video content calendar established.
- Professional, PCEDA-branded video content produced and distributed.
- Partner cross-promotion increased.
- Engagement metrics reviewed and used to guide future content.

### **3. Determine the Viability of a Regional Workforce Training Center**

**OBJECTIVE** Determine whether a regional workforce training center can sustainably address employer needs and identified training gaps.

#### ***Action Steps***

- Define the project concept, potential training focus, facility requirements, and possible ownership or management structure.
- Secure funding for and complete a workforce needs assessment using employer input, labor-market information, training-gap analysis, and an inventory of existing providers within the region.
- Engage employers, education providers, the school system, workforce organizations, colleges, universities, and other partners to determine participation and program delivery capacity.
- Identify the strongest initial training programs based on employer demand, student interest, instructor availability, equipment, and space.
- Complete a financial feasibility analysis addressing capital and operating costs, potential revenue, break-even requirements, governance, and long-term sustainability.
- Make a final proceed/do-not-proceed recommendation based on market need, financial projections, risk, funding strategy, and sustainability.

#### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Workforce needs assessment funded and completed.
- Employer and training-provider participation documented.
- Financial feasibility analysis completed.
- Board receives a clear implementation recommendation.

### **4. Develop a Sustainable Funding Strategy for PCEDA**

**OBJECTIVE** Diversify and strengthen recurring revenue sources that support PCEDA's long-term organizational and project capacity.

### ***Action Steps***

- Conduct a focused Board/staff session to identify and prioritize sustainable revenue opportunities.
- Implement a Northpointe Business & Industry Park property owners association or comparable mechanism to help cover shared maintenance costs.
- Review sustainable funding strategies used by successful West Virginia development authorities.
- Evaluate revenue-producing development opportunities, including housing site development, an Innovation Center with leasable office space, and other property development models.
- Continue monitoring property acquisition, development, lease, and resale opportunities that could generate recurring or project-based income.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Revenue diversification options evaluated and prioritized.
- Northpointe maintenance funding mechanism advanced.
- At least one revenue-producing development concept evaluated for feasibility.
- Potential property-based revenue opportunities maintained in the development pipeline.

## **5. Monitor and Pursue Strategic Property Acquisition Opportunities**

**OBJECTIVE** Expand Preston County's inventory of marketable industrial, commercial, and redevelopment properties by proactively identifying and evaluating strategic acquisitions.

### ***Action Steps***

- Maintain property selection criteria addressing acreage, highway access, utilities and capacity, topography, and development potential.
- Monitor commercial and industrial listings, real estate professionals, auctions, and underutilized or surplus properties held by public or private entities.
- Maintain a working inventory of potential acquisition properties with ownership and contact information.
- Evaluate financing options in advance, including WVEDA and local lending resources, to improve PCEDA's ability to act when a suitable property becomes available.
- Use option agreements or other site-control tools when appropriate to allow due diligence before acquisition.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Property criteria maintained and applied consistently.
- Potential acquisition inventory updated during the year.
- Financing and site-control options evaluated.
- Qualified acquisition opportunities presented to the Board as they arise.

## **6. Increase Housing & Senior Living Opportunities**

**OBJECTIVE** Increase the availability of workforce and senior housing and evaluate

## **opportunities for senior living development that support employers, residents, and community needs.**

### ***Action Steps***

- Secure funding for and conduct housing market analysis to quantify demand for workforce, senior, and assisted-living housing and identify gaps by housing type and price point.
- Identify development sites with appropriate water, sewer, road, broadband, utility access, and proximity to employment and services.
- Share market information with residential and senior-living developers and promote Preston County's Build WV designation and available development opportunities.
- Where PCEDA site preparation is appropriate, partner with developers, secure site control, complete due diligence, and pursue infrastructure funding.
- Develop a targeted senior-living recruitment strategy using market data, suitable sites, regional facility information, quality-of-life assets, and outreach to prospective developers and health-care partners.
- Build local partnerships with health care, senior services, the Chamber, County Commission, and other organizations that can support housing and senior-living development.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Housing market demand documented.
- Priority development sites identified.
- Housing and senior-living developers contacted.
- Funding/site-preparation opportunities advanced where feasible.

## **7. Expand Tourism & Agritourism Partnerships**

**OBJECTIVE** Strengthen tourism as an economic development strategy through collaboration, agritourism, outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, destination development, and private investment.

### ***Action Steps***

- Meet regularly with Visit Mountaineer Country, the Chamber of Commerce, Farmland Protection Board, municipalities, and tourism stakeholders to identify joint economic development initiatives.
- Support farms and producers pursuing agritourism by connecting them with grants, financing, technical assistance, and marketing resources.
- Identify tourism assets and related business opportunities with potential to generate private investment, business expansion, and job creation, including lodging, dining, recreation, retail, entertainment, and visitor attractions.
- Develop collaborative marketing initiatives that highlight Preston County's recreational, agricultural, historical, and cultural assets through PCEDA and partner communication channels.
- Assist communities and partners in pursuing funding for tourism-supportive infrastructure such as trails, wayfinding, public spaces, downtown improvements, broadband, utilities, and transportation access.

- Expand partnerships supporting outdoor recreation, heritage, arts, festivals, cultural attractions, and private investment in visitor amenities.
- Monitor and pursue state, federal, and foundation funding opportunities supporting tourism, agritourism, recreation, downtown revitalization, and community development.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Regular tourism partner coordination maintained.
- Agritourism and tourism businesses connected with assistance resources.
- Joint marketing or project initiatives advanced.
- Tourism-related grant and infrastructure opportunities pursued.

## INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES | THREE TO FIVE YEARS

### 1. Evaluate a Year-Round Farmers Market

**OBJECTIVE** Evaluate the feasibility of a sustainable year-round farmers market that supports agriculture, small business, local food access, tourism, and community activity.

#### *Action Steps*

- Assess community demand, vendor interest, customer preferences, successful market models, and potential governance structures.
- Convene partners including agricultural organizations, producers, municipalities, the Farmland Protection Board, Chamber, Visit Mountaineer Country, and WVU Extension.
- Evaluate potential locations and facility needs, including parking, utilities, accessibility, cold storage, kitchen space, and vendor amenities.
- Develop an initial funding strategy and, if warranted, a business and operations plan addressing governance, budget, staffing, vendor participation, rental structure, and long-term sustainability.
- Build producer participation and evaluate season-extension and value-added production opportunities.
- Coordinate the market concept with tourism, community events, festivals, and downtown development.

#### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Feasibility assessment completed.
- Potential partners and locations evaluated.
- Operating and funding model identified if feasible.
- Proceed/do-not-proceed decision supported by documented findings.

### 2. Explore Drone / UAS Training and Manufacturing Opportunities

**OBJECTIVE** Position Preston County to pursue unmanned aircraft systems opportunities through training, research, testing, manufacturing, maintenance, and workforce partnerships.

#### *Action Steps*

- Assess regional UAS opportunities, market trends, workforce needs, and Preston County's competitive advantages.
- Initiate partnership discussions with Camp Dawson, the West Virginia National Guard, educational institutions, government agencies, workforce organizations, and private-sector UAS companies.
- Inventory industrial sites, training facilities, broadband, utilities, and transportation assets that could support UAS operations.
- Identify funding programs supporting advanced manufacturing, defense industries, workforce development, and unmanned aircraft technologies.

- Explore training pathways, pilot certification, maintenance, advanced manufacturing, testing, and demonstration opportunities.
- Include UAS manufacturers, suppliers, software, sensor technology, and maintenance providers in business recruitment efforts and encourage research and commercialization partnerships.

#### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Regional opportunity assessment completed.
- Strategic partners engaged.
- Applicable sites/assets and funding opportunities identified.
- At least one viable training, testing, recruitment, or manufacturing pathway defined.

### **3. Expand Business Education, Succession Planning & Local Business Sustainability**

**OBJECTIVE** Collaborate with the Preston County Chamber of Commerce and other partners to strengthen existing businesses, support ownership transitions, and encourage local spending.

#### ***Action Steps***

- Establish an annual business education partnership with the Chamber and engage SBDC, WVU Extension, financial institutions, attorneys, accountants, and consultants.
- Assess local business education needs, including succession and estate planning, workforce, financing, marketing, e-commerce, cybersecurity, and regulatory compliance.
- Develop and maintain a business resource network connecting owners with professional services, funding programs, technical assistance, and educational resources.
- Offer workshops and technical assistance focused on business continuity, ownership transfer, financial management, marketing, workforce, and expansion.
- Support owners approaching retirement by connecting them with succession, legal, financial, and transition resources that help preserve local businesses and jobs.
- Coordinate Shop Local initiatives and evaluate commercial hubs or destination shopping areas that encourage customers to visit multiple Preston County businesses.

#### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- Annual education schedule developed with partners.
- Business resource network maintained.
- Succession/business education programming delivered.
- Local shopping and commercial hub opportunities evaluated.

### **4. Determine the Feasibility of a PCEDA Revolving Loan Fund**

**OBJECTIVE** Evaluate whether a PCEDA Revolving Loan Fund can provide sustainable gap financing for business start-ups, expansions, retention, redevelopment, industrial development, and job creation.

### ***Action Steps***

- Assess demand for gap financing and identify financing needs not adequately addressed by traditional lenders or existing programs.
- Research successful revolving loan fund models, governance structures, capitalization methods, underwriting standards, and administrative requirements.
- Engage financial institutions, WVEDA, SBA, USDA Rural Development, regional development organizations, and other partners to identify complementary roles and capital sources.
- If feasible, develop a business plan, lending policies, underwriting and risk-management standards, loan servicing procedures, governance, and financial sustainability model.
- Determine whether administration should be handled internally or through a contracted servicing organization and establish reporting and compliance requirements.
- Pursue initial capitalization and, following Board approval, launch and market the program while coordinating referrals with existing business assistance and lending programs.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- RLF demand and feasibility documented.
- Potential capitalization sources and partners identified.
- Program business plan and policies developed if feasible.
- Board receives a clear recommendation on capitalization and launch.

# MAINTENANCE OBJECTIVES

*Core responsibilities that sustain PCEDA's economic development mission*

Maintenance Objectives represent recurring responsibilities that sustain PCEDA's core economic development functions. They are reviewed annually and adjusted as needed to reflect project status, organizational capacity, and changing economic conditions.

**1 Public Information & Board Communication** — Inform the public about PCEDA activities through press releases, local media, interviews, public presentations, e-newsletters, social media, and other appropriate channels. Keep Board members informed of project status through regular meetings and updates.

**2 LED Grant & Local Match** — Secure the West Virginia Local Economic Development Grant and matching Preston County Commission funding allocation.

**3 Business Retention & Expansion** — Conduct annual business retention visits with at least 10 Preston County employers and coordinate, where appropriate, with WVDED, SBDC, the WV Division of Forestry, and other state partners.

**4 Website, Community Profiles & Property Inventory** — Maintain current information on the PCEDA website, community profiles, and available site and building inventories.

**5 Property Marketing** — Market available business, industrial, and commercial properties through direct referrals, local real estate partners, PCEDA channels, and WVDED marketing systems.

**6 Community Communication Strategy** — Maintain a clear, consistent, and accessible communication strategy for PCEDA programs, projects, and accomplishments. Review communication methods regularly and refine outreach based on effectiveness and stakeholder needs.

**7 County Water & Sewer Infrastructure** — Continue supporting the planning, funding, design, construction, and administration of water and wastewater infrastructure projects throughout Preston County. Coordinate with municipalities, public service districts, utilities, and funding agencies to advance priority improvements and future system needs.

**8 Property & Asset Management** — Maintain, operate, lease, improve, and protect PCEDA-owned properties and facilities to support economic development objectives, preserve public investment, and generate revenue where appropriate.

**9 Prospect Response** — Respond to inquiries from business prospects within twenty-four hours.

**10 Staff Professional Development** — Provide ongoing professional development and training opportunities for PCEDA staff.

**11 Annual Strategic Planning** — Organize and conduct an annual strategic planning meeting to establish priorities for the upcoming fiscal year and provide an opportunity for public participation.

**12 Annual Planning & Budget Documents** — Prepare the Annual Strategic Plan, Annual Work Program, and organizational budget each year.

**13 Economic Development Partnerships** — Coordinate with local, regional, and statewide economic development partners, including MAAP, the Preston County Farmland Protection Board, Visit Mountaineer Country, the Preston County Chamber of Commerce, Woodlands Development Group, WV HUB, WVHAZ, Region VI, WVDED, WVEDC, and SBDC.

**These recurring functions provide the organizational foundation for implementing PCEDA's strategic initiatives and responding to changing economic development opportunities.**

## Annual Performance Review

PCEDA staff will review progress on the Annual Work Program throughout the fiscal year and prepare an annual status update for the Board of Directors. The review will identify completed actions, work in progress, barriers or funding dependencies, and recommended changes for the next planning cycle.

### ANNUAL REVIEW FRAMEWORK

- Completed – objective or action substantially achieved.
- In Progress – active work is underway and should continue.
- Pending / Dependent – progress depends on funding, partner action, approvals, market conditions, or another project.
- Revised – objective remains relevant but the approach, scope, or timing should change.
- Closed / Not Pursued – objective is complete, no longer feasible, or no longer a priority.

### IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLE

**The Annual Work Program is an implementation tool and should remain flexible. PCEDA may adjust sequencing and individual actions during the fiscal year when funding opportunities, project conditions, business prospects, or partner commitments require a timely response.**

## CONCLUSION

### *Turning strategy into sustained economic progress*

The Preston County Economic Development Authority Strategic Plan 2026–2027 provides a focused framework for strengthening the county's economy while preparing for future opportunities. It connects Preston County's competitive assets with practical priorities in site development, workforce, housing, infrastructure, business support, tourism, emerging industries, and organizational capacity. Together, the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Program establish both the direction of the Authority and the actions needed to move that direction forward. Successful economic development requires persistence, partnerships, and the ability to respond when opportunities emerge. PCEDA will continue working with businesses, local governments, utilities, educational institutions, workforce organizations, tourism and agricultural partners, regional organizations, and state and federal agencies to leverage resources and advance projects that create jobs, encourage private investment, improve infrastructure, strengthen local businesses, and enhance quality of life throughout Preston County.

| THE PLAN IS DESIGNED TO ADVANCE FOUR CONNECTED OUTCOMES          |                                                           |                                                             |                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| INVESTMENT                                                       | JOB & WORKFORCE                                           | COMMUNITY CAPACITY                                          | DIVERSIFICATION                                               |
| Improve readiness for private-sector investment and development. | Support employers and expand opportunities for residents. | Advance housing, infrastructure, tourism, and partnerships. | Cultivate new industries, entrepreneurs, and financing tools. |

### Looking Ahead

This Strategic Plan is intended to remain a living management document. Progress will be reviewed through the Annual Work Program, performance measures, and regular Board evaluation. Initiatives may be completed, revised, accelerated, or deferred as funding, market conditions, project dependencies, and partnership opportunities change. This flexibility will allow PCEDA to remain accountable to its priorities without losing the ability to respond to time-sensitive economic development opportunities.

## BUILDING PRESTON COUNTY'S FUTURE

**By building on existing strengths, addressing identified challenges, and investing strategically in people, places, businesses, and partnerships, PCEDA will continue working to create a more competitive, resilient, and prosperous Preston County for current and future generations.**

## **BOARD ADOPTION**

This Strategic Plan was adopted by the Preston County Economic Development Authority Board of Directors as the guiding framework for the Authority's economic development priorities and FY 2026–2027 Annual Work Program.

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**Date of Adoption**

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**Board Chair**

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**Executive Director**