



SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

2023–2024 Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s (SNC’s) 2019–2024 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan), *Securing California’s Environmental and Economic Future: Protecting and Restoring the Health and Resilience of Sierra Nevada Watersheds and Communities*, established the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) as SNC’s overarching initiative.

The WIP’s innovative and holistic approach to building watershed and community resilience focuses on five Regional Goals, as outlined in the SNC Strategic Plan:

- Healthy Watersheds and Forests
- Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- Vibrant Recreation & Tourism
- Strategic Lands Conserved
- Impactful Regional Identity

The SNC is committed to carrying out activities in support of these goals, recognizing there are a number of factors that can affect the level of activity undertaken by the SNC in each of the goal areas year to year, such as availability of funding, staffing changes, and state policy priorities. Each goal area in the Strategic Plan presents specific strategies designed to guide the SNC in identifying actions to present each year in its Action Plan. Using the approach outlined in the Strategic Plan, the SNC takes actions in assessing needs, developing partnerships, addressing policy barriers, pursuing funding, and testing out new ways of doing business for each goal area.

The actions identified in this plan continue to build on the SNC’s work as a funder, supporter, and collaborator around critical capacity building, planning, and project implementation efforts aimed at improving the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the SNC Region. The Action Plan is designed to focus the SNC’s work so that it can respond well to Regional needs, while also helping to advance the WIP goals of the Strategic Plan, as well as the broader goals of state policymakers and commitment to shared stewardship with the US Forest Service (USFS). The Action Plan is also written with flexibility in mind, given unanticipated opportunities and challenges that may materialize in the months ahead.

Structure and Focus

The following activities represent the Action Plan for July 2023 through June 2024. As described above, the actions contained herein, alongside the core work that staff engages with each day, continue to move forward the strategies identified in SNC’s current five-year Strategic Plan. This Action Plan is the final annual plan related to the current Strategic plan, which will be updated and presented for board approval over the months ahead. This Action Plan includes organizational and administrative activities, which are foundational to ensuring operations are well managed and the SNC continues to be a great place to work.

The statute that created the SNC emphasizes the importance of carrying out its mission and goals in an integrated and complementary manner. To that end, the following activities are assigned by team within the SNC organization, but work is completed through active coordination and collaboration across divisions.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Executive Leadership is responsible for the overall success of the SNC. All strategic priorities, agency goals, and organizational structure – through support and approval of the Governing Board – are organized and laid out by Executive Leadership. Executive Leadership also enhances the internal efficiency and effectiveness of the agency in order to optimize business opportunities and development.

In addition, Executive Leadership builds and maintains relationships that are core to the success of the SNC, such as positive rapport with the Board; state legislators; key legislative staff; policy decision-makers and influencers; state, federal, county, and local governmental agencies; and vital public and private partners. Executive staff members are the face and voice of the SNC at the legislative, state, and local government levels, are responsible for informing state and federal policy and decision-makers of the importance of the Sierra-Cascade to the state of California, and maximize the role the SNC plays in decisions that affect the Region’s environmental and economic well-being.

Core Functions—Executive Leadership

Executive Team

Organizational Leadership and Strategic Program Direction

Executive Leadership sets direction and priorities for SNC staff and programs, with support and approval by the Board, to optimize internal operations and maximize external impact. This is accomplished by keeping staff members well informed of policy and issues affecting both the Region and the SNC, as well as offering a supportive workplace that empowers employees. Executive Leadership continues to help the SNC set and achieve major milestones. Furthermore, Executive Leadership fosters a welcoming agency culture, and explores and implements ways that support principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the organization.

Policy Engagement and Development

Executive Leadership engages in legislation, policies, and programs that fit SNC’s mission and the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. The staff stays informed on federal and state actions and trends, as well as work/news of partner involvement, to determine how the SNC may support and/or enhance respective efforts. Executive Leadership works to optimize the SNC’s role in federal and state measures that affect the environmental and economic well-being of the Sierra-Cascade, while offering expertise and skills as an ideal partner to ensure that vital and necessary on-the-ground work gets accomplished.

Policymaker and Partner Relationships

Developing relationships and strengthening bonds with state policymakers is key to ensuring decision-makers are well-informed about the importance of the Sierra-Cascade and the SNC. Collaboration with public and private entities at all levels is critical to achieving the goals in the Strategic Plan. Executive Leadership not only establishes the necessary relationships to get Region-wide work accomplished, but also strengthens them. By focusing on building stronger state, federal, and non-governmental partner relations, the SNC will be positioned as an effective bridge between the state and the Region.

State-level Engagement

Executive Leadership tracks priorities established by the secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and state-level policy staff. For example, the secretary has established four primary priorities for departments within the CNRA: building climate resiliency; protecting biodiversity; expanding community access to parks, recreation, and natural spaces; and expanding nature-based solutions. Executive Leadership engages in discussions around these priorities, shares Regional needs and perspectives to inform policymaking, and provides direction to staff on program development and alignment around these priorities, as needed.

Funding Development

Executive Leadership seeks consistent and complementary revenue sources that keep the SNC on the front lines of protecting and restoring forest, watershed, and economic health to the critical Sierra-Cascade. This is accomplished through developing partnerships and projects with other state and federal agencies and programs, elevating funding needs to funding decision-makers, and identifying and sharing opportunities for investment in the Region.

Fiscal Management and Operations

Executive Leadership safeguards the long-term stability and sustainability of the SNC and the ability of the organization to efficiently and effectively serve the people of the state of California by ensuring its budget and resources are well managed, with proper oversight and transparency. Executive Leadership will track, implement, and communicate state direction and SNC policies related to remote work, employee health and safety, and related issues.

Legal Services and Government Accountability

Legal staff provides critical analyses and guidance in the development of legal positions/actions and in the implementation of administrative laws, rules, and regulations relating to the more-complicated aspects of human resources and contract-law compliance, and other administrative areas, and provides guidance on policy development to SNC Executive Leadership and the SNC Governing Board.

Actions—Executive Leadership

In addition to these core functions that move progress forward on the five WIP goals, Executive Leadership will focus on the following actions.

1. Action: Increasing Pace and Scale

Executive Leadership will continue to support efforts that drive the pace and scale of ecological forest management and restoration across the Region. This includes supporting concepts that meet our partners where they are to “raise all boats” so that work can be carried out quickly, efficiently, and at the pace needed to restore the health of, and protect the communities within, the Sierra-Cascade Region. This past year, in collaboration with state and federal partners, the SNC developed its Landscape Investment Strategy and launched the Landscape Grant Pilot Program, which pools investment from the SNC, CAL FIRE, and USFS (and other potential funders) to support high-capacity collaboratives ready and able to implement projects that further forest resilience and other Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program goals. In the coming year, Executive Leadership will:

- a) Work with staff to administer the Landscape Grant Pilot Program (LGPP) and track the project work that has been funded by partners under the LGPP and report on progress to the Board.
- b) Continue to assess, support, and amplify the variety of needs of partners throughout the Region by investing in capacity and collaboration-building (via the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grant), supporting projects that advance forest health and resilience and other regional goals (via SNC’s programs or other investments and assistance), and by further developing opportunities for collaborators that are positioned or primed to manage work across a large footprint.

These actions will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goals of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Healthy Watersheds and Forests, Vibrant Recreation and Tourism, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, Impactful Regional Identity.

2. Action: Strategic Planning

Executive staff will provide direction on the planning, outreach, and development of the SNC’s next five-year strategic plan (2024-2029). The plan will guide SNC in future years to advance the regional goals of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, expand our work into our new boundary area, build in equity and climate resilience (as may be required by statute), and further other goals identified during the development of the Strategic Plan.

3. Action: Meeting Boundary Expansion Requirements

On January 1, 2022, Public Resources Code Chapter 182, Statutes of 2021 (Senate Bill 208) added just over 1.3 million acres to SNC’s boundary. The statute also required the SNC to submit recommendations for legislation to the Legislature to “change the name

of the conservancy and board, and to change the structure of the regions, subregions, and board, to align the conservancy with its recent expansion into the Counties of Shasta, Siskiyou, and Trinity.”

Working with the advisory committee of the SNC Governing Board, Executive Staff prepared recommendations that were approved by the SNC Governing Board and presented to the legislature in SNC’s 2022 Annual Report. At the time of the writing of this Action Plan, Senate Bill 39 (Laird) is moving through the Legislature, which will enact the recommended changes to revise the SNC’s subregions and require the conservancy to support efforts that advance climate resilience and equity and other minor and conforming changes to SNC’s statute. If enacted, Executive Leadership will lead staff in the implementation of those changes and will continue to develop new relationships and expand our program dollars into the new service area. Executive Leadership will also continue to track Senate Bill 841 (Dahle), which would further expand SNC’s service area. Executive Leadership and SNC staff will continue to keep the board informed on any decisions related to SNC boundary expansion.

This action supports expanding the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan and WIP goals into the new service area.

FIELD OPERATIONS & GRANTS

The primary function of Field Operations & Grants is to serve the needs of the Sierra-Cascade Region. Field Operations & Grants is uniquely positioned to understand Regional issues and be a voice for the Sierra-Cascade by maintaining positive working relationships with Regional and statewide partners through active leadership and participation in collaborative groups focused on any of the five Regional Goals identified in the Strategic Plan. This effort leads to Field Operations & Grants designing and developing SNC grant programs, as well as communicating with Executive Leadership and Policy & Outreach to amplify issues of the Region to state policymakers and decision-makers.

Core Functions—Field Operations & Grants

Grants & Reimbursements

Grant Program Development and Administration

Grants & Reimbursements develops and administers grant programs focused on achieving SNC's goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. This includes both competitive grant and directed-grant programs. All programs are organized and coordinated through the application of guidelines, policies, and processes for the distribution and administration of various state and federal funds. This also involves all aspects of program delivery, such as soliciting requests for proposals, completing application intake and processing, eligibility, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review, project scoring, formal agreement development, and agreement management. Grants & Reimbursements also establishes and maintains long-term monitoring of all closed grants. The staff continuously provides administrative support to Field Operations and Partnerships & Community Support staff engaged in individual project management under these programs.

Reimbursements Program Administration

Grants & Reimbursements administers what are identified as reimbursements: grants and agreements that are supported by funds outside of those directly appropriated to the SNC's own budget, such as California Climate Investments, Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grants, or Good Neighbor Agreements with federal partners. Grants & Reimbursements also assists in the development of the Stewardship Council conservation covenants, administers associated agreements, and supports Field Operations staff conducting annual monitoring. The staff actively builds partnerships within the Sierra-Cascade to strategically disperse funds throughout the Region in ways that advance the goals of the funder and the SNC's Strategic Plan. Grants & Reimbursements diligently looks to bolster reimbursement grants by seeking additional revenue streams through subgrants, contracts, and general agreements. Grants & Reimbursements also provides

critical administrative support to other SNC departments that implement Reimbursement projects.

Field Operations

Collaborative Planning and Project Development

Field Operations participates in approximately 40 collaborative resource-management groups throughout the Sierra-Cascade and staff members lead six of these collaboratives. The purpose of the SNC's involvement is to keep track of priorities and trends in the Region to inform state policy and help develop and support the best projects that align with SNC priorities and state and federal funding opportunities. Field Operations adds expertise and capacity in underserved geographies and supports partners' capacity-building efforts. Field Operations also tracks and pursues new opportunities for additional reimbursement agreements and grants that could support the priorities of the Region.

Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Field Operations assists smaller project-focused partnerships as part of its grant management tasks (see below). In these partnerships, Area Representatives are involved in the granular details of accomplishing projects, and this is where much of the on-the-ground troubleshooting and learning occurs.

Grant Management

Field Operations manages the SNC's local-support grants, which have historically been the SNC's primary grant programs (local-support grants use funds directly allocated to the SNC, typically from bond measures or the General Fund). Local-support grants are distinct from reimbursement grants, such as California Climate Investments and Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) grants that the SNC receives from other agencies and then regrants to partners. Depending on the source/purpose of the funds, reimbursement grants are managed by Grants & Reimbursements or Partnerships & Community Support.

Grant management includes developing agreements that adequately specify deliverables, schedules, and budgets. To ensure grants are on time and on track, it also includes overseeing progress reports, processing invoices and change requests, conducting site visits, and monitoring projects after completion. Area Representatives spend about 50 percent of their time managing grants, although this can vary widely between Subregions.

Because Area Representatives are deeply involved in numerous projects across the Sierra-Cascade, they are uniquely positioned to identify and share best practices. Area Representatives may connect grantees in different geographies that face similar challenges and facilitate information sharing between high-capacity organizations and

smaller organizations. They also help partners identify additional funding opportunities, with additional expertise and support provided by Partnerships & Community Support.

Monitoring

Field Operations monitors completed grants for the term specified by underlying bond legislation to ensure state investments and improvements are maintained. Staff members periodically visit sites and maintain monitoring records. In addition, Field Operations works with the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council to monitor lands transferred from PG&E to the US Forest Service.

Actions—Field Operations & Grants

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions that move forward the five WIP goals, the Field Operations & Grants team will focus on actions in the following areas.

1. Action: Healthy Watersheds and Forests Grant Program

Pending approval of the Budget Act of 2023, the SNC anticipates \$37 million in General Fund to the SNC for wildfire resilience local assistance grants. The Program will award any funds appropriated to the SNC for this purpose, and staff will continue to manage all awarded projects throughout the Region, including projects funded by previous grant rounds.

This action will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goal of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Healthy Watersheds and Forests.

2. Action: Other Grant Programs

Pending approval of the Budget Act of 2023, SNC staff will implement any “Nature-Based Solutions” / “conservancy purposes” funding it may receive in General Fund, or other funding source, through one or more of the SNC’s existing Programs: Strategic Land Conservation, Vibrant Recreation and Tourism, and Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities.

This action will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goals of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Strategic Land Conservation, Vibrant Recreation and Tourism, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities.

3. Action: Reimbursements

Staff will continue to provide support for active reimbursement grants, managing reimbursement grants from the following programs: Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Climate Change Investments, Plumas National Forest Good Neighbor Agreement, a Natural Disaster grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development, and grants from the Department of Conservation’s Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program.

This action will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goal of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Healthy Watersheds and Forests.

4. Action: Stewardship Council Administration

Under its agreement with the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Council), the SNC is undertaking various responsibilities upon the Council's dissolution (which is expected to happen sometime this fiscal year.) The SNC will continue to serve as the holder of Conservation Covenants over USFS lands in perpetuity; continue to oversee the transfer of existing Conservation Easements held by qualified entities attached to other PG&E-donated (to other than the USFS) and PG&E-retained properties to new assignees, if needed; begin to administer the Stewardship Council's Enhancement Grant Program; and agree to provide one five-year update to the Council's report to the California Public Utilities Commission on the impacts of the PG&E Land Conservation Commitment.

This action will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goal of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Healthy Watersheds and Forests.

POLICY & OUTREACH

The primary functions of Policy & Outreach are to inform state policy development and funding direction to serve the needs of the Sierra-Cascade Region. This is accomplished through tracking and synthesizing the latest trends and scientific studies on forestry, watershed health, organizational capacity, wood utilization, and other relevant issues; utilizing the recommendations and outcomes of relevant research to inform policy development; and sharing those recommendations and outcomes through communication efforts. Staff members focus on educating key decision-makers about the importance of the Sierra-Cascade Region and the policy and funding needs of the Region. In addition, Policy & Outreach also educates partners in the Region about state policy and program trends to help in-Region efforts and projects align with state goals.

Policy & Outreach also provides strategic direction to special projects and programs that advance science and technology in the Region, build capacity of partner organizations, and explore innovative governance, planning, and project implementation.

Developing and maintaining relationships with legislators and respective staff, state and federal agencies, local governments, Regional partners, the research community, and traditional and non-traditional media contacts is the key to success. In addition, while Policy & Outreach supports all the Regional Goals in the SNC's Strategic Plan, it focuses heavily on the cultivation of an impactful Regional identity for the Sierra Nevada.

Core Functions—Policy & Outreach

Policy

Legislation and Policy Analysis

Policy focuses on keeping a finger on the pulse of legislation, policies, and programs, as well as analyzing the potential impacts to the SNC, its programs, partners, and the Region. Analyses are shared with SNC staff and the Board, policy partners, and the California Natural Resources Agency, when appropriate.

Policy Development

Policy utilizes the SNC's Regional expertise to inform policy and legislation development that will meet the needs of the Region. The staff provides technical assistance and support on legislation and responds to requests for information from legislators, legislative staff, and other agency partners. Staff also engage in statewide policy development through workgroups and direct partner interactions.

Policy Education

Policy educates legislators and legislative staff about the value of the SNC, the Region, and the work that the SNC and its Regional partners do to help advance state goals. The staff works closely with Communications to develop messaging, strategies, and materials for policymakers and partners. The staff also hosts field tours and briefings for legislators, their staff, and other policymakers to help improve the understanding of Sierra Nevada issues, opportunities, and the vital work of the SNC.

Building and Maintaining Relationships

Policy builds and maintains relationships with legislators, legislative staff, and partners who are key to influencing state policy, including SNC Legislative Liaisons. Policy staff participates in policy and legislation workgroups, hosts face-to-face meetings, and keeps in regular contact with policymakers in order to stay informed on current and potential future legislation, policies, and programs.

Communications

State Decision-maker Education

Communications creates and distributes compelling science-based content that shows why the Sierra-Cascade is important to California and why the SNC is vital to supporting the Region. Communications creates videos, infographics, factsheets, articles, and reports that highlight Regional challenges and the essential role the SNC plays in implementing solutions with statewide benefits. Content is distributed digitally through SNC's social media channels, websites, and email-distribution lists, and through in-person meetings, presentations, and conferences.

News Outlet Relationship Management

Communications is the SNC's primary point of contact with the media. It responds to reporter inquiries and proactively works to publicize the SNC's work by writing and distributing press releases and media advisories about newsworthy events. Communications creates strong, stable working relationships with reporters by consistently providing timely, relevant, and engaging information.

Amplification of Regional Voices

Communications supports Regional agency and non-governmental organization partner outreach efforts by providing content development and technical assistance where needed and helping to bolster beneficial messaging. The staff also connects partners to relevant reporters and media outlets and shares selected content from Regional partners via the SNC's distribution channels.

Outreach to SNC Target Audiences

Communications frequently publishes original content aimed at increasing interaction on social media and increasing followers and engagement on the SNC’s social media platforms.

Science

Scientific Data

Science tracks, reviews, and analyzes the latest scientific and Regional data for relevant trends, as well as potential impacts to or integration with SNC programs, partners, and the Region. Analyses are shared with SNC staff and the Board, policy partners, and state partners when appropriate.

Initiative and Policy Development

Science utilizes Regional science and data expertise to inform state and Regional initiatives, policy, and legislation development that supports the needs of the Region. Science & GIS provides technical assistance and support to state, federal, and collaborative partners, while also responding to requests for information from legislators, legislative staff, and state and federal agencies.

Science and Data Outreach and Communication

Science engages in public forums and on technical advisory panels as subject experts to elevate the scientific and technical needs, trends, and importance of the Region in statewide and Regional efforts. The staff works closely with Communications to explore innovative ways to communicate science and data and develop messaging, strategies, and outreach materials for policymakers and partners.

Building and Maintaining Relationships

Science builds and maintains relationships with Regional and national scientists and subject-matter experts in order to stay on top of the latest research, data, and land management guidance. Science & GIS utilizes these relationships to broaden the SNC’s understanding of statewide and global trends and how those trends may impact the Region, SNC’s partners, and SNC’s programs.

Technical Assistance and Support

Science provides project mapping support, data analysis, and technical assistance to both internal and external programs and initiatives.

Partnerships & Community Support

Funding and Capacity Trends Analysis

Partnerships & Community Support tracks and analyzes funding and capacity trends in the Region with a concentration on needs and opportunities around forest health and community protection. Partnerships & Community Support also provides assessments on specific funding and capacity areas, when needed, to inform the development of SNC programs or projects, and coordinates and/or participates in Regional workgroups that help advance SNC’s Strategic Goals.

Funding, Capacity Building, and Technical-Assistance Resources

The staff identifies funding, and capacity-building and technical-assistance resources available for the Region through research and disseminates information about these opportunities through regular, ongoing communications to partners and stakeholders. Partnerships & Community Support also works with SNC staff and partners to identify funding for specific projects and provides free training to partners, such as grant-writing workshops.

Capacity Building in the Region

Partnerships & Community Support develops, supports, and implements Region-wide capacity-building programs, including specific capacity-related SNC-funded grant programs, as well as block-grant programs awarded to the SNC by other agencies or organizations.

SNC Tribal Engagement Coordination

Partnerships & Community Support provides guidance and coordination on SNC tribal engagement to help optimize integration of tribal engagement in SNC programs and policies, including legal requirements, such as Assembly Bill 52, as per direction from the Governor’s Tribal Liaison.

Regional Partnerships and Collaboration Support

Partnerships & Community Support assists Regional partnerships, collaboratives, and tribes with funding strategies, grant application development, facilitation, advisement, and other related roles to help increase funding for project work and build organizational capacity. Partnerships & Community Support also hosts grant-writing workshops throughout the Region to support organizations engaged in forest and watershed health and sustainable recreation projects in both in-person and virtual formats.

Actions—Policy & Outreach

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions that move forward the five WIP goals, the Policy & Outreach division plans to focus on the following actions.

1. Action: RFFCP Implementation

The SNC currently serves as a Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program block grantee and administers subgrants throughout the Region, which support organizational capacity building, planning, and the prioritization of projects that can help to improve forest health and resilience and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires. Staff will continue to implement the program under several agreements, totaling over \$25 million, with the Department of Conservation. In addition, staff will begin development of its Regional Priority Plan, which is the SNC's core deliverable as a grantee under the RFFCP and will prepare all required reporting on metrics and outcomes.

This action will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goals of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Healthy Watersheds and Forests, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities.

2. Action: Tribal Engagement

To ensure meaningful and authentic tribal engagement is integrated throughout SNC's policies and programs, staff will continue to look for ways to improve processes, notifications, and other work activities. The staff will also begin the development of a tribal capacity program with funds received from the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grant.

This action will implement various strategies in the following Regional Goal of the 2019-23 SNC Strategic Plan: Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities.

3. Action: 20th Anniversary Commemoration

The SNC will reach its 20th anniversary in 2024. Working across all divisions of the SNC, staff will review and assess SNC's work through the years to reflect and better understand the impact it has had as in the Region. Staff plans to highlight SNC's anniversary and our two decades of work at the annual Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Summit (the WIP Summit) in March.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services carries out a broad array of administrative functions that support the effective and efficient implementation and achievement of SNC’s mission and goals, as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Core Functions—Administrative Services

Administrative Team

Financial Operations

The SNC’s Financial Operations staff provides budgeting and accounting services that are vital to the implementation of the grants program and overall operational activities of the SNC. Financial Operations staff interacts with the CNRA bond program and various control agencies, including the Department of Finance and State Controllers’ Office, to provide essential resources and ensure fiduciary accountability and transparency in all aspects of the SNC’s activities.

Human Resources

The SNC’s employees are the agency’s most-valuable assets. Professionals in the Human Resources (HR) team keep staff healthy, happy, and productive. They provide and implement guiding policies, ensure staff is paid on time, develop and deliver effective training and cross-training opportunities, and implement health and safety programs. In FY 2023-24, HR staff will also take on the task of supporting the statewide effort to modernize the state’s human resources management, travel and business expense, and payroll infrastructure, the California State Payroll System (CSPS) Project.

Information Technology

Critical to all SNC programs are the hardware, software, and networks that make up its core technology services. Working with the CNRA and the California Department of Technology, Information Technology (IT) staff members develop, monitor, and implement programs that support communications and core-operational activities.

Business Services

Business Services works to keep the heat and lights on, ensure vendors and contractors are paid, and that vehicles are in good working condition and available for daily staff activities. Staff ensures that facilities and vehicles are operated in compliance with the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (CalOSHA) rules and regulations, and that all plans associated with emergency response and government continuity are updated and exercised regularly, as required by the California Office of Emergency Services (OES). Business Services staff makes sure critical contracts and provisions of

necessary supplies are provided to carry out the mission of the SNC; that they are handled in compliance with Department of General Services' laws, rules, and guidelines; and that all related policies are applied appropriately.

Board Support

Team members working in the SNC's Board Support unit provide the key communication link between the Board and SNC staff. Staff provides direct administrative support to Boardmembers and oversees Board meeting planning and implementation activities. Staff also ensures Boardmember compliance with training and Form 700 reporting requirements, as well as develops all training materials and onboarding activities for new Boardmembers. The Board Support staff works closely with IT staff in identifying and selecting all Regional Board meeting sites.

Actions—Administrative Services

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions, Administrative Services plans to focus on actions in the following areas.

1. Action: Bringing All Accounting Services In-House

Due to its size and limited permanent resources, the SNC has used contracted accounting services provided by the Department of General Services' Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS). As funding sources, funding, and complexity of funding agreements have grown, the SNC began providing additional in-house resources to its accounting program. This has partly been due to changed needs in the accounting program, but also because contracted services are costly, running at \$300k per year, on average. This year, the SNC will begin the process of requesting additional permanent resources to bring all CFS-contracted accounting services in-house. This has become an urgent need due to reductions in SNC's operational budget, funded through the Environmental License Plate Fund. It is anticipated that approximately \$225,000 could be saved to this fund by the SNC in providing its own accounting services.

2. Action: Succession Planning/Cross-Training

Always a priority, special emphasis will be placed on analyzing possible impacts of expanded telework opportunities, along with tracking potential retirements, to ensure the SNC remains ready to address the loss of key staff. It has been demonstrated that expanded telework opportunities across the state have resulted in increased opportunities for upward mobility and career growth for SNC staff. Additionally, several key staff members are nearing retirement age, and significant planning and early actions will be needed to provide the skill set and knowledge needed for effective continuity of operations in those areas. Additional opportunities for the cross-training of existing staff will be developed, as well as continuing to establish recruitment processes that will find and bring the best talent available onto the SNC team.