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# SRI research shows how Nevada can spearhead the clean energy transition

An economic strategy roadmap crafted by SRI experts and state officials capitalizes on Nevada's unique lithium supply chain.



Long famous for its tourism and entertainment industries, Nevada now stands poised as a nation-leading hub of clean energy development and independence. That's the main takeaway from a **new statewide economic strategy** prepared by SRI International in collaboration with the state's Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) and released earlier this year.

In crafting the strategy, experts at SRI analyzed Nevada's industries, innovations, and investments. The upshot: a road map for state leadership to leverage the state's assets and bring about a sustainable, economically vibrant future.

"This statewide economic plan helps to redefine and build on the diversity and innovation of Nevada's economy," said Christiana McFarland, the Director of SRI's Center for Innovation Strategy and Policy (CISP) and one of the report's preparers. "The plan also recognizes the catastrophic impact of the pandemic on businesses and workers in the state and charts a course to support those affected and those traditionally left out of the innovation economy."

Through CISP, SRI works frequently with governments and organizations around the world to develop practical, adaptable economic and workforce development strategies and policies. Overall, McFarland explained, the goals of CISP's research are to create environments conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation, achieve resilient and inclusive growth, and accelerate the long-term economic and social impacts of investments in science and technology.

## **A complete lithium supply chain**

For the new strategy report, SRI's experts and their collaborators at GOED identified major factors that can drive Nevada's innovation ecosystem. These include the state's established entrepreneurial culture, low cost of living, and access to the fifth-largest economy in the world, California, right next door.

Building off this base, Nevada can become "ground zero," the strategy report states, for transitioning to clean energy through lithium-ion batteries. This technology has made significant inroads in the electrification of vehicles and the storage of renewable energy from sunlight and wind. But lithium still has enormous room to grow before it replaces fossil fuels.

Nevada is uniquely positioned to help propel this important transition, the strategy report contends. Already home to the only operational lithium mine in the United States, Nevada is also home to Redwood Materials, a battery-recycling and materials-producing company based in Carson City. The company, which recently expanded, is filling the critical roles of refurbishing, recycling, refining, and remanufacturing sustainable battery materials.

“Nevada is now one of a few locations—maybe the only location—in the world with a complete lithium supply chain,” said McFarland. “Nevada has a rare mix of natural resources and technologies that enable the state to play a key role in the energy independence and security of the United States, in addition to spurring economic growth within the state.”

## Meeting the economic moment

In continuing along this promising economic path, however, Nevada is faced with certain challenges, the strategy report states.

For instance, Nevada must boost its science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce. In the report, SRI’s experts accordingly recommend that Nevada align internal organizational workforce development structures around industry targets and forge industry partnerships with education programs at local colleges and universities.

In addition, SRI recommends increased funding for research and innovation activities, along with grant programs for business expansion and commercialization. Yet another critical area for delivering on Nevada’s economic promise, the strategy report states, is revamped infrastructure, from tribal communities’ expanded internet access to increased mass transit in Las Vegas.

These and other steps forward identified in the report demonstrate how SRI devises detailed strategies and policies in collaboration with clients. More such opportunities abound, McFarland said. The rapid diffusion of new technologies, from clean energy tech to artificial intelligence, are transforming how economies grow and develop. McFarland said that analysis and road-mapping are much needed to comprehensively understand the changes and minimize their negative impacts.

For Nevada, the new economic strategy can help ensure that the state thrives sustainably and inclusively in the decades ahead.

“Nevada is truly transforming from an economy based strictly on gaming and entertainment to one that is likely to lead the nation in energy and supply chain security,” said McFarland. “That’s a big leap, but with strategy, planning, and commitment, Nevada is well on its way to achieving this success.”

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