



COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) 2026-2031

AMERICAN SAMOA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DRAFT

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ACRONYMS

ASCC	American Samoa Community College
ASCOC	American Samoa Chamber of Commerce
ASG	American Samoa Government
ASTCA	American Samoa Telecommunications Authority
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
CEDS-AS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of American Samoa
DBAS	Development Bank of American Samoa
DOA	ASG Department of Agriculture
DOC	ASG Department of Commerce
DOE	ASG Department of Education
DOI OIA	Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs
DPA	ASG Department of Port Administration
DPW	ASG Department of Public Works
EDA	Economic Development Administration
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Administration
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
FMWA	Federal Minimum Wage Act
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GO	ASG Office of the Governor

HR	ASG Department of Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
OP	ASG Office of Procurement
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
SBA	Small Business Administration
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Region Environment Program
SSBCI	Small State Business Credit Initiative
STP	Samoa Tuna Processors
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis
TBAS	Territorial Bank of American Samoa



❖ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for American Samoa (CEDS-AS 2026–2031) establishes the Territory's strategic framework for promoting sustainable economic growth, strengthening economic resilience, expanding private-sector opportunity, and improving the quality of life for the people of American Samoa. Prepared by the American Samoa Government Department of Commerce through a collaborative planning process involving government agencies, private-sector stakeholders, educational institutions, community organizations, and federal partners, this CEDS provides a practical roadmap for guiding economic development investments and policy decisions over the next five years.

American Samoa enters this planning period from a position of both opportunity and challenge. The Territory has demonstrated resilience in responding to natural disasters, global economic disruptions, public health emergencies, and changes within its principal industries. At the same time, the economy continues to face structural constraints associated with geographic isolation, limited economic diversification, high transportation costs, workforce challenges, infrastructure needs, and dependence on a relatively small number of economic sectors and external funding sources. These realities underscore the importance of pursuing a coordinated, long-term economic development strategy that strengthens the Territory's economic foundation while expanding opportunities for future growth.

The CEDS-AS 2026–2031 builds upon previous planning efforts while updating the strategic direction to reflect current economic conditions, emerging opportunities, and lessons learned during recent years. The strategy is informed by a review of the Territory's economic history, analysis of historical GDP trends, the Business Climate and Confidence Survey, stakeholder engagement, and a comprehensive SWOT Analysis. Together, these components provide the analytical foundation for identifying strategic priorities that are evidence-based, practical, and responsive to the needs of the Territory.

The CEDS is organized around three mutually reinforcing strategic goals:

Goal 1: Build a Robust Business Environment and Business Ecosystem.

Goal 2: Strengthen Existing Industries and Develop New Industries.

Goal 3: Strengthen Secondary Economic Development Support Systems.

Together, these goals seek to create a more diversified, competitive, and resilient economy by supporting private-sector investment, expanding workforce capacity, strengthening critical infrastructure, improving government coordination, encouraging innovation, and developing industries that build upon American Samoa's unique comparative advantages.



Implementation of the CEDS is supported by an Evaluation Framework and implementation schedule that establish measurable objectives, performance indicators, implementation responsibilities, and continuous monitoring procedures. These tools are intended to strengthen accountability, support informed decision-making, and allow the Territory to refine implementation strategies as economic conditions evolve while remaining focused on achieving its long-term development goals.

Economic resilience serves as a guiding principle throughout the CEDS rather than as a stand-alone initiative. Recognizing the increasing frequency of natural disasters, public health emergencies, supply chain disruptions, and global economic uncertainty, the strategy integrates resilience into infrastructure investment, workforce development, economic diversification, institutional capacity, and long-term planning. This approach strengthens the Territory's ability to anticipate, respond to, and recover from future challenges while sustaining economic growth.

Ultimately, the CEDS-AS 2026–2031 represents more than a planning document. It reflects American Samoa's commitment to collaborative leadership, evidence-based decision-making, strategic investment, and continuous improvement. By aligning economic analysis with practical implementation, the CEDS provides a shared roadmap for government, businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and community partners working together to build a stronger, more resilient, and more prosperous American Samoa.



❧ INTRODUCTION: ADVANCING AMERICAN SAMOA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

American Samoa stands at an important point in its economic development journey. Building upon its unique geographic location, rich cultural heritage, strategic relationship with the United States, resilient people, and established economic industries, the Territory has an opportunity to strengthen its economy, expand opportunities for its residents, and improve long-term prosperity for future generations.

Like many island economies, American Samoa faces unique opportunities and challenges. Geographic isolation, a limited land base, transportation costs, workforce constraints, vulnerability to natural disasters, and dependence on external markets continue to influence economic growth and competitiveness. At the same time, the Territory possesses significant strengths, including a strategic location in the South Pacific, access to U.S. markets and federal programs, an experienced workforce, strong community institutions, and emerging opportunities in technology, aquaculture, renewable energy, workforce development, and other sectors capable of supporting long-term economic diversification.

Economic development is not achieved through individual projects or isolated investments. Rather, it requires a coordinated, long-term commitment to strengthening the conditions that allow businesses to grow, workers to succeed, communities to prosper, and public institutions to effectively support sustainable economic growth. It requires collaboration among government agencies, private-sector organizations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, community leaders, and federal partners working toward a common vision for the Territory's future.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS-AS) 2026–2031 provides that strategic framework. Developed under the leadership of the American Samoa Government Department of Commerce (DOC), the CEDS establishes a shared vision for economic development and identifies the goals, priorities, and actions necessary to strengthen the Territory's economy over the next five years. More than a planning document, the CEDS serves as a management framework that guides strategic investment, supports informed decision-making, encourages collaboration, and promotes accountability through performance measurement and continuous improvement.

This updated CEDS builds upon the strong foundation established during the previous planning period while reflecting new economic information, implementation experience, stakeholder engagement, evolving federal guidance, and emerging opportunities for growth. The strategic vision remains consistent—to promote a resilient, diversified, competitive, and sustainable economy that improves the quality of life for the people of American Samoa. The strategies supporting that vision, however, have been strengthened to better position the Territory to respond to changing economic conditions and to capitalize on future opportunities.

Throughout this document, economic resilience is recognized as an essential element of sustainable development. Resilience is reflected not only in the Territory's ability to prepare for and recover from natural disasters and external economic disruptions, but also in its capacity to adapt, innovate, diversify, and continuously improve. Strengthening resilience requires investments in businesses, infrastructure, workforce development, public institutions, technology, and economic information systems that collectively support long-term prosperity.

The CEDS-AS 2026–2031 is intended to serve a broad range of users. It provides a common strategic framework for government agencies, elected leaders, private-sector organizations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, community stakeholders, and federal partners. It also serves as an important guide for identifying economic development priorities, supporting grant applications, coordinating public investment, evaluating progress, and informing future policy decisions.





Ultimately, the success of this CEDS will not be measured solely by the completion of projects, but by the Territory's ability to strengthen its economy, expand opportunities for its people, improve resilience, and achieve measurable progress toward its long-term vision. Implementation of the strategies presented throughout this document will require continued leadership, collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to the sustainable economic future of American Samoa.

The sections that follow describe how this updated CEDS was developed, summarize the Territory's current economic conditions and future outlook, identify strategic priorities, establish an implementation and evaluation framework, and provide a practical roadmap for guiding economic development throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.



⌘ UPDATING THE CEDS FOR 2026 - 2031

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is intended to be a living strategic planning document that evolves as economic conditions, community priorities, and development opportunities change over time. While the long-term vision for American Samoa's economic future remains consistent, the strategies, implementation framework, and supporting analyses must be periodically reviewed and refined to ensure that the CEDS continues to serve as an effective guide for economic development decision-making.

The CEDS 2026–2031 builds upon the strong foundation established by the previous planning cycle. Rather than developing an entirely new strategy, the Department of Commerce conducted a comprehensive review of the existing CEDS to evaluate progress achieved, consider lessons learned during implementation, incorporate updated economic information, and respond to current Economic Development Administration (EDA) guidance.



This updated edition reflects significant enhancements throughout the document. The planning horizon has been extended to 2026–2031, economic and demographic information has been updated, stakeholder engagement has been expanded, and the Business Confidence Survey has been refreshed to reflect current business perspectives. In addition, the CEDS now includes an expanded Economic Forecast and GDP Outlook, a strengthened Strategic Direction chapter, an enhanced Evaluation Framework, and a comprehensive Implementation, Monitoring, Performance Management, and Continuous Improvement Framework that reinforces accountability and long-term implementation.

These updates recognize that economic development is an ongoing process rather than a one-time planning exercise. They also acknowledge that implementation over the previous planning period has provided valuable experience that has strengthened the Territory’s understanding of its opportunities, challenges, institutional capacity, and economic priorities.

Accordingly, the CEDS 2026–2031 should be viewed as the next stage in American Samoa’s long-term economic development strategy. It preserves the Territory’s long-term vision while strengthening the strategic framework, implementation approach, and performance management systems needed to guide economic development over the next five years.

Building upon the accomplishments and lessons of the previous planning period, this updated CEDS provides a stronger foundation for coordinated decision-making, strategic investment, and continuous performance improvement as American Samoa advances its long-term economic development goals.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CEDS-AS 2026–2031

The development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS-AS) 2026–2031 reflects the American Samoa Government Department of Commerce's commitment to collaborative, data-informed, and implementation-focused economic planning. Building upon the foundation established by the previous CEDS, the Department undertook a comprehensive review of the Territory's economic conditions, implementation experience, stakeholder priorities, and emerging opportunities to ensure that this updated strategy remains relevant, practical, and responsive to the Territory's evolving development needs.

The planning process was guided by the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) CEDS requirements while recognizing that effective economic development extends beyond compliance with federal planning guidance. Accordingly, the Department sought to develop a strategy that not only satisfies EDA requirements but also serves as a practical management framework for coordinating economic development initiatives, guiding public investment, supporting grant development, and strengthening collaboration among government agencies, the private sector, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, community stakeholders, and federal partners.

Development of the CEDS incorporated multiple sources of information and stakeholder input. Economic and demographic trends, workforce information, infrastructure assessments, the Business Confidence Survey, the Territorial SWOT Analysis, agency consultations, and community engagement activities collectively informed the strategic priorities presented throughout this document. Particular emphasis was placed on understanding both the Territory's existing economic strengths and the emerging opportunities capable of supporting long-term economic diversification, resilience, and sustainable growth.

The Department also evaluated implementation experience under the previous CEDS to identify successful initiatives, lessons learned, and areas where strategies could be strengthened or refined. This review reinforced the importance of aligning strategic priorities with implementation capacity, performance measurement, and continuous stakeholder engagement. As a result, the CEDS-AS 2026–2031 places greater emphasis on coordinated implementation, accountability, data-informed decision-making, and continuous improvement throughout the planning period.



Consistent with EDA guidance, the CEDS-AS 2026–2031 is organized around five integrated components that collectively establish the Territory’s economic development framework:



01 SUMMARY BACKGROUND

This section provides an overview of American Samoa’s economic history, demographic characteristics, current economic conditions, and economic outlook that establishes the foundation for strategic planning.



02 SWOT ANALYSIS & BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY

This section evaluates the Territory’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats while incorporating private-sector perspectives regarding current business conditions and future expectations.



03 STRATEGIES & ACTION

This section establishes the Territory’s long-term economic vision through integrated goals, objectives, strategies, and representative actions that guide public and private investment throughout the planning period.



04 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This section establishes the performance measures, evaluation processes, and accountability mechanisms that monitor implementation, assess progress, and support continuous improvement.

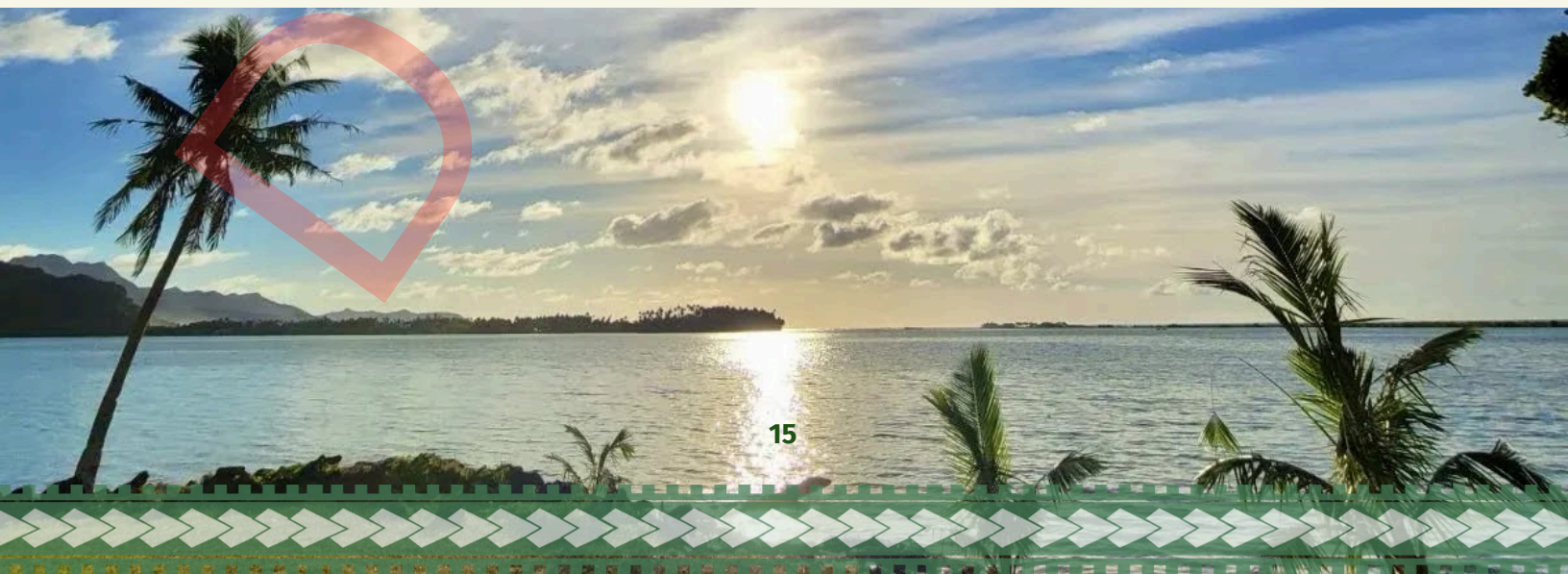


05 ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

This section identifies strategies that strengthen the Territory's ability to anticipate, withstand, adapt to, and recover from economic disruptions while supporting sustainable long-term development.

Together, these components form an integrated strategic management framework that connects planning, implementation, performance measurement, and continuous improvement. Rather than serving solely as a planning document, the CEDS-AS 2026–2031 is intended to function as a practical management tool that supports coordinated decision-making, strategic investment, and collaborative action across the Territory.

Successful implementation will ultimately depend upon sustained leadership, active stakeholder participation, effective interagency collaboration, and a shared commitment to advancing American Samoa's long-term economic prosperity, resilience, and quality of life.





❖ SUMMARY BACKGROUND

Understanding the Territory's economic history, demographic characteristics, geographic setting, and current economic conditions provides the essential context for the strategic priorities presented throughout this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. American Samoa's economic development has been shaped by its unique location, relationship with the United States, cultural heritage, and the resilience of its people. These factors continue to influence the opportunities and challenges that define the Territory's economic future.

American Samoa is one of five inhabited U.S. territories and the only one located south of the equator in the South Pacific Ocean, approximately 7,000 miles from Washington, D.C., 4,800 miles from California, and 2,500 miles from Hawai'i. While this strategic location provides important geopolitical and regional advantages, it also presents unique economic challenges associated with geographic isolation, transportation costs, market access, and economies of scale.

There were approximately 18,357 workers in The Territory in 2020, with as many as 2,394 unemployed, yielding an unemployment rate of 13.2% - a marked improvement from the 19.6% unemployment rate in 2017 as reported in the previous CEDS. In 2022, the American Samoa real gross domestic product (GDP) was \$645 million, which represents a 1.8% increase from the 2021 real GDP of \$634 million, and a 7.6% increase from the 2017 real GDP of \$599 million.

The implementation experience, economic disruptions, and recovery efforts during the previous planning period have shaped the strategic priorities presented in this CEDS-AS 2026-2031. The lessons learned during those years provide an important foundation for the Territory's next phase of economic development.



ECONOMIC HISTORY & CONTEXT

As a small island economy, American Samoa has historically been vulnerable to both internal and external economic shocks. Understanding the Territory's economic history provides important context for the opportunities, constraints, and strategic priorities identified throughout this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Little data has been archived from before World War II, and only sparse economic data can be found from the years before 2002. Available resources indicate an economy that quickly transformed from primarily agricultural, in the early 20th century, to booming by the 1940's, when U.S. Department of Defense project funds flooded The Territory. Immediately following the end of World War II, the flow of federal dollars slowed to a trickle and the local economy remained stagnant for nearly a decade.

In 1949, a cannery was built on the main island of Tutuila to process and export locally harvested tuna. It was unprofitable and subsequently closed until a 1953 rule change allowed the unloading of fish from non-US flag vessels in the territory. The Van Camp company re-established the cannery and enticed a Japanese fleet of longliners to make Pago Pago their main off-loading port. After a decade of Van Camp's success in American Samoa, StarKist Foods opened a second cannery and saw the fleet of Asian longliners continue to grow, along with a new fleet of US purse seine vessels. Eventually, other canneries transferred some operations to American Samoa, including Chicken of the Sea and Tri-Union.^[1]

[1] Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "The Tuna Canneries".
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/ai001e/ai001e09.htm>

While the canneries helped to lift the local economy, local government revenues were still insufficient to maintain the infrastructure that had sprung up when the US military occupied much of the territory in the 1940s. An article in the July 1961 Readers Digest, titled “Samoa: America’s Shame in the South Seas”, highlighted deteriorating government facilities, roads, and public infrastructure throughout Pago Pago. The article sparked a new wave of federal funds into the territory, improving roads, government buildings, healthcare facilities, and tourism infrastructure.

The surge in federal dollars was a welcomed lifeline but also opened the islands up to an unprecedented level of regulatory oversight. Over the next four decades, The Territory was hit with an increasingly complex federal regulatory environment, which often yielded greater negative externalities than the benefits the associated funds provided to the people of American Samoa. The private sector struggled to remain profitable, and economic growth slowed for many years. The first sign of problems occurred in 1997 when Van Camp filed for bankruptcy. Not long after American Samoa was included in the 2007 Fair Minimum Wage Act, Chicken of the Sea ceased operations in Pago Pago, costing the territory at least 2,000 full-time-equivalent jobs.



This may have been the beginning of another economic downward spiral, if not for the dual impact of FEMA disaster relief funds, following a deadly tsunami that struck The Territory in 2009, and a short-term spike in federal grant funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The surge in federal government spending provided much-needed relief, albeit temporary, in the economy after the Chicken of the Sea closure. The total population has decreased in all but one year since the tsunami and cannery closure, from 71,100 in 2009 to 60,300 in 2017. Additionally, employment and wages have been stagnant, growing at an average annual rate of 1.2%, and consumer prices have grown at an annualized rate of 2.7%. Real GDP has fallen by \$80 million over this period.

The economy of American Samoa went through a series of wild fluctuations, including the damage from the tsunami, the cannery closure, and the flood of grant funds that washed through the territory in 2010 and 2012. Conditions began to stabilize in 2014, when real GDP increased by 1.0%, followed by another 1.3% in 2015. The new growth was spurred, in part, by a large capital investment by Tri Marine International in the purchase and construction of land and facilities for processing and packaging locally harvested tuna. The facility opened early in 2016, under the name Samoa Tuna Processors (STP). Competition from Asian-based canneries immediately put the company in a precarious position and processing operations permanently halted in late 2016. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in American Samoa fell by 0.2% in that year, though the contraction was closer to 2.5% when adjusted for inflation.

STP laid off as many as 600 employees, which led to hundreds of additional job losses in related and support industries in 2016 and 2017. Star-Kist, the last remaining tuna processor in the territory, also faced setbacks in 2017. Availability of landed fish, along with some federally mandated equipment upgrades, forced the company to temporarily halt operations for five weeks in the fourth quarter of 2017. The shutdown left thousands of employees without salaries to cover basic expenses and cost the local government more than half a million dollars in income tax revenues.

The combined impact of the cannery closures contributed to a spike in the unemployment rate in The Territory, rising from 10.5% in 2016 to 14.3% in 2017, and led to stagnant spending in both the private and public sectors. As a result, the economy contracted by 2.9% in 2017. Transportation costs rose modestly that year as well, causing real GDP to contract by a clip of 5.9%.

The recession might have extended into the following year if not for a devastating cyclone that impacted much of American Samoa in February of 2018. By some estimates, Cyclone Gita caused as much as \$186 million in direct and indirect damages across the territory. At least 50% of all citizens were faced with some level of loss to real and/or personal property during the cyclone. Food, water, and other necessities were in high demand throughout the days and weeks that followed. During that time, automated teller machines were persistently low on cash supplies as the people of the territory scrambled to draw enough to cover immediate repair and replacement costs. Additionally, international relief agencies distributed pre-loaded gift cards to families and individuals most affected by the storm. This is expected to have led to a spike in personal expenditures immediately following the cyclone, especially on nondurable goods, such as food, water, cooking fuel, and clothing.

Simultaneously, government spending surged as emergency supplies were procured, relief staff were brought in, and debris removal efforts ramped up. Damage to private and public property was evaluated over the following months, and more than \$20 million was distributed to individuals and families through the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration's (FEMA) Individual Assistance programs. At least \$12 million more is expected to be approved to assist in rebuilding and repairing public property and infrastructure through FEMA's Public Assistance programs. Additionally, approximately \$40 million more in federal assistance came in from US Small Business Administration loans, intergovernmental service agreements, disaster-related grants, other federal programs, and private insurance.

Federally funded reconstruction and recovery efforts after the tropical cyclone GITA and increased exports of canned tuna and related products explained the increase in GDP of 2.57% in 2018, while the downturn in the tuna cannery output and exports, a decline in the government sector, and the onset of COVID-19 restrictions negatively impacted the economy, causing a 0.5% drop in GDP in 2019. In 2020, across-the-board growth in all GDP components, except for a rise in imports, led to a 4.5% increase in GDP. The decline in the private sector due to reduced tuna output and exports, partially offset by the increase in the government sector, primarily the increase in territorial government employees' compensation, was the primary cause of the drop in GDP of 0.8% in 2021. Finally, increases in the export of canned tuna and related products and government spending supported by the various COVID-19 federal assistance programs were responsible for the 1.8% growth in GDP in 2022.





The unprecedented level of COVID-19 federal relief funding provided critical short-term support to the territorial economy during and immediately following the pandemic. As these temporary federal resources are fully expended, the Territory's long-term economic performance will increasingly depend on sustained private-sector investment, workforce development, infrastructure modernization, economic diversification, and strategic public investment. This transition underscores the importance of the strategic priorities and implementation framework presented throughout this CEDS.

The historical experience of American Samoa demonstrates both the opportunities and vulnerabilities associated with a small island economy that remains highly dependent on a limited number of industries and external funding sources. This history provides the foundation for the Economic Outlook, Business Climate and Confidence Survey, SWOT Analysis, and Strategic Direction presented in the chapters that follow, while underscoring the importance of economic diversification, resilience, workforce development, and sustainable long-term growth.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK & GDP TRENDS

The purpose of economic forecasting is not to predict the future with certainty, but to provide decision-makers with a reasonable understanding of the trends, opportunities, and risks that may influence the Territory's economic development over the planning period. Together with the Summary Background, Business Confidence Survey, and SWOT Analysis, this assessment provides the analytical foundation for the strategic priorities presented later in this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

The economic outlook presented in this section is intended to support planning, guide strategic investment, and inform implementation of the Territory's long-term economic development goals. It reflects current economic conditions, historical trends, and reasonable assumptions regarding future economic activity while recognizing the inherent uncertainties affecting small island economies.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data for American Samoa are published by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) with a multi-year lag, and no official GDP projections are produced for the U.S. territories. Given these constraints, this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) relies on a trend-based assessment of historical GDP performance and the known structural drivers of the territorial economy.



Over the past decade (2013–2022), American Samoa’s economy has exhibited modest but generally stable economic performance, reflecting its highly concentrated economic structure. Real GDP fluctuations have been modest, with contractions during external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by recoveries driven primarily by government spending and export activity.

The territorial economy is dominated by two primary sectors: tuna canning and U.S. government activity. Tuna canning represents the principal private-sector export base, while federal and territorial government expenditures account for a substantial share of overall economic output. As a result, GDP performance is closely linked to production levels in the tuna industry and federal funding patterns rather than diversified private-sector expansion.

In the near term (2023–2025), GDP growth is expected to remain modest and consistent with historical patterns. Continued stability in tuna canning operations and sustained federal support suggest incremental growth rather than rapid expansion. Absent diversification, economic performance will remain vulnerable to sector-specific disruptions. Accordingly, the economic diversification, workforce development, infrastructure, and private-sector development strategies outlined in this CEDS are critical to improving long-term growth and resilience.

Table 1. Historical GDP Trend Summary (Illustrative; No Forecast Projections)

PERIOD	GDP TREND	PRIMARY DRIVER
2013 - 2016	Modest/ Stable Growth	Tuna canning, government spending
2017	Contraction	Cannery disruption
2018	Recovery	Federal disaster assistance
2019	Softening	Export variability
2020	Growth	Federal stimulus
2021	Decline	Private-sector slowdown

The historical GDP trends summarized above reinforce several important observations regarding the Territory's economic outlook. While the economy has demonstrated resilience through periods of disruption and recovery, its continued dependence on a limited number of industries highlights the importance of economic diversification, workforce development, infrastructure investment, and private-sector expansion. These observations directly inform the Strategic Direction, Objectives, and Action Plans presented in the following chapter and underscore the importance of coordinated implementation, strategic investment, and continuous performance monitoring throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.



BUSINESS CLIMATE & CONFIDENCE SURVEY

The perspectives of the Territory's business community provide an important complement to the economic data presented in the preceding sections. While statistical indicators describe historical economic performance, business owners and employers offer valuable insights into current operating conditions, emerging opportunities, and the practical challenges affecting investment, employment, and economic growth.

Small businesses play a crucial role in supporting the two-pillar economy of American Samoa. Additionally, they have the potential to act as a catalyst for diversification, helping to disrupt and expand The Territory's economic base. To gauge small business owners' confidence, the Business Confidence Survey was conducted to gather their insights on the state of the economy and the prospects for future investment and development. These findings aim to inform government policies related to economic and business development.

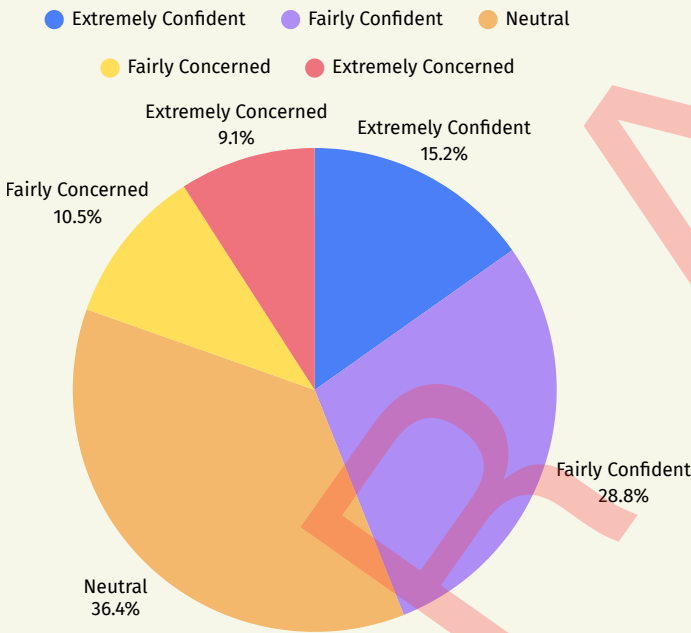
[2]

[2] The survey was conducted from the end of February to the end of May 2024. A sample of 150 businesses was randomly selected to whom the online Google survey link was sent. The survey was also advertised in the Samoa News. Sixty-six (66) businesses responded to the survey. Sreenivasan S. Panickar, Ph.D in Population Studies, designed and conducted the survey.

The first group of survey questions examines business confidence, perceptions of current economic conditions, expectations for the Territory's future economy, and individual business prospects. Together, these responses provide valuable insight into the level of confidence within the private sector and the degree to which businesses are prepared to invest, expand, and contribute to future economic growth.

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU WITH THE PROSPECT OF REINVESTING IN THE EXPANSION OR GROWTH OF YOUR BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION?

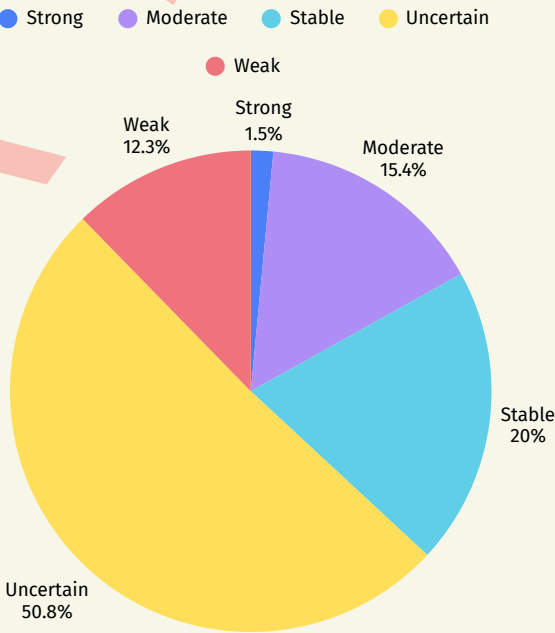
Figure 1



A combined 44% of respondents expressed confidence in reinvesting in their business growth, with 15.2% being extremely confident and 28.8% being fairly confident. However, 36.4% remained neutral, and 19.6% were fairly or extremely concerned about reinvesting. This data highlights varying levels of business confidence: while a notable portion is optimistic, the majority expressed caution or concern (Figure 1).

HOW WOULD YOU BEST DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATE OF THE AMERICAN SAMOA ECONOMY?

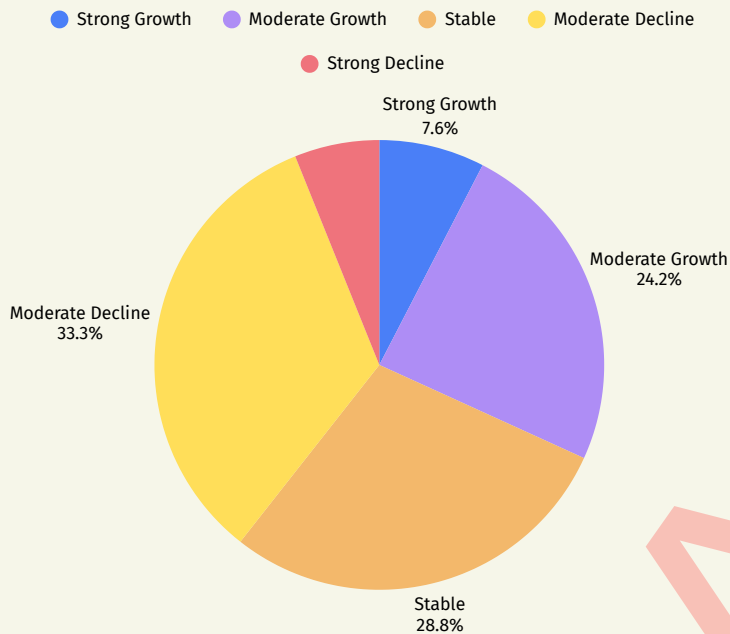
Figure 2



A majority of respondents (50.8%) indicated uncertainty regarding the current state of the American Samoa economy. Meanwhile, 20% viewed the economy as stable, 15.4% as moderate, 12.3% as weak, and 1.5% as strong (Figure 2).

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE AMERICAN SAMOA ECONOMY IN THE FUTURE (5 YEARS)?

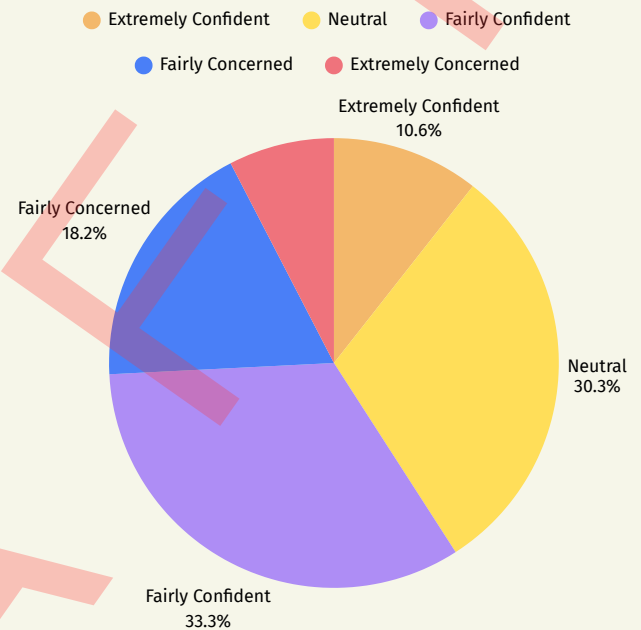
Figure 3



Responses regarding the five-year economic outlook reflect a cautiously optimistic but mixed perspective, with 33.3% anticipating a moderate decline and 28.8% expecting stability. However, a notable 24.2% foresee moderate growth, with the optimistic 7.6% seeing strong growth and offering a reassuring counterbalance. A substantial decline is expected by 6.1% of the respondents. Overall, the data presents a mixed but generally cautious perspective, with a significant portion of respondents expecting either stability or moderate decline (Figure 3).

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS PROSPECTS OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

Figure 4

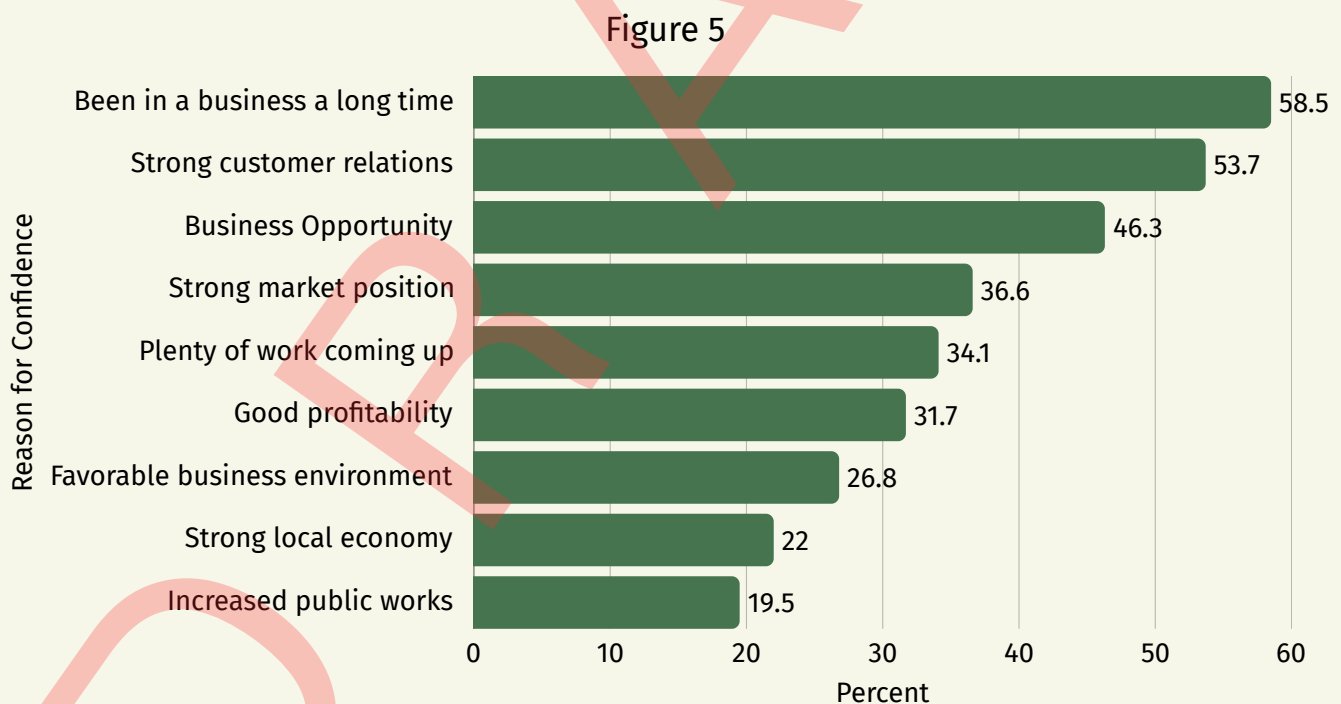


While a substantial share of respondents are confident, it is notable that 30.3% have adopted a neutral stance, signaling some uncertainty or a wait-and-see approach. Additionally, 25.8% expressed concern, with 18.2% moderately concerned and 7.6% extremely concerned. This offers stakeholders a perspective of business sentiment over the next 12 months (Figure 4).

The next set of survey questions explores the factors influencing business confidence. Respondents identified both the conditions that encourage investment and growth, as well as the challenges that limit business expansion. These findings provide important guidance for economic development policy and help identify areas where strategic interventions may strengthen the Territory's business climate.

IF CONFIDENT, WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR BEING CONFIDENT?

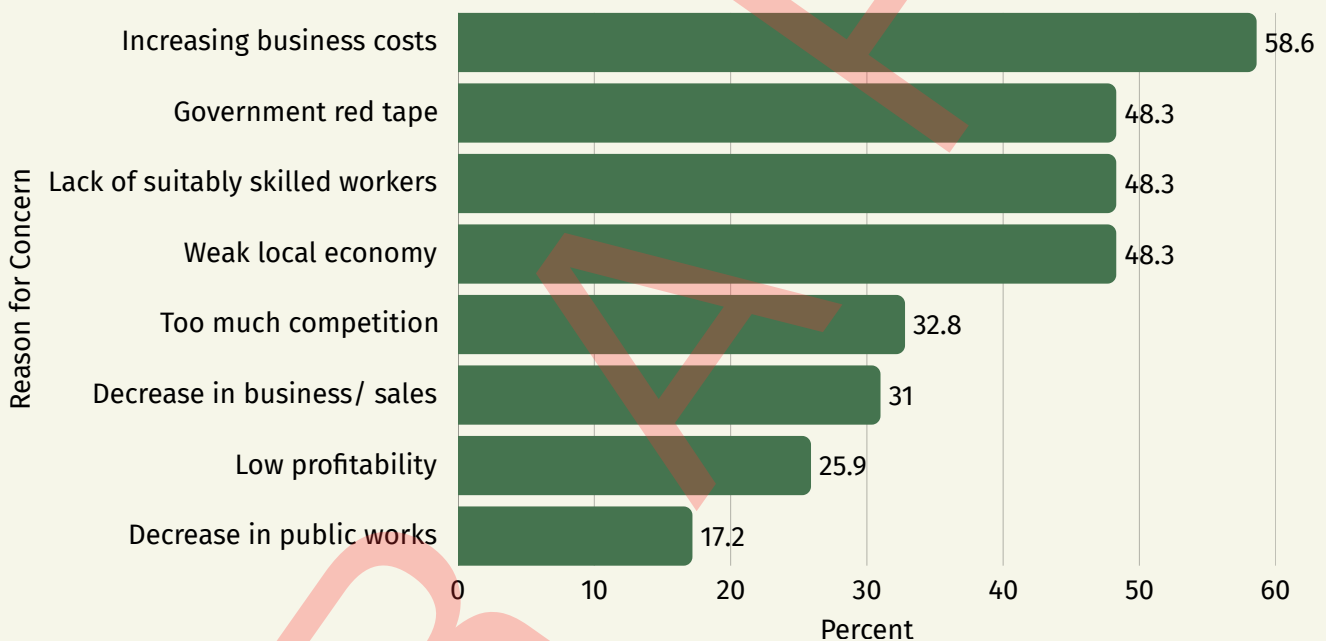
The main reasons behind business confidence include longevity in business, 58.5% of respondents, emphasizing the importance of experience and established operations, strong customer relations, 53.7%, underscoring the value of customer loyalty and satisfaction, new business opportunities, 46.3%, and strong market position, 36.6%. A notable 26.8% attributed their confidence to the favorable business environment, 22% to the robust local economy, and 19.5% to public works, underlining the role infrastructure projects and government initiatives play in instilling confidence in the business community (Figure 5).



IF CONCERNED, WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR BEING CONCERNED?

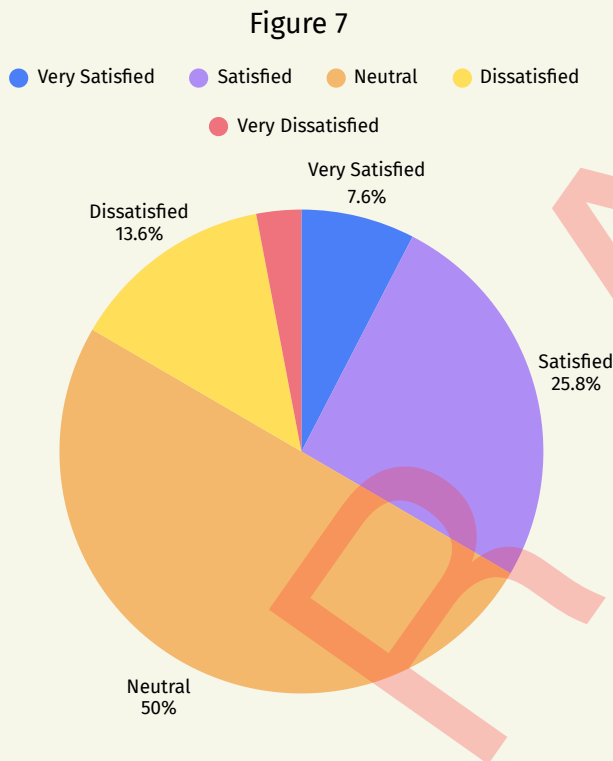
Businesses identified rising operating costs, workforce shortages, government red tape, and broader economic conditions as the principal constraints affecting business confidence and future investment decisions: 48.3% lack of suitably skilled tradespeople and professionals, 48.3% government red tape, and 48.3% weak local economy. Other contributing factors including 32.8% too much competition, 31% decrease in business or sales, and 25.9% low profitability, suggesting market saturation. A decline in public works projects impacted business confidence for 17.2% of respondents (Figure 6).

Figure 6



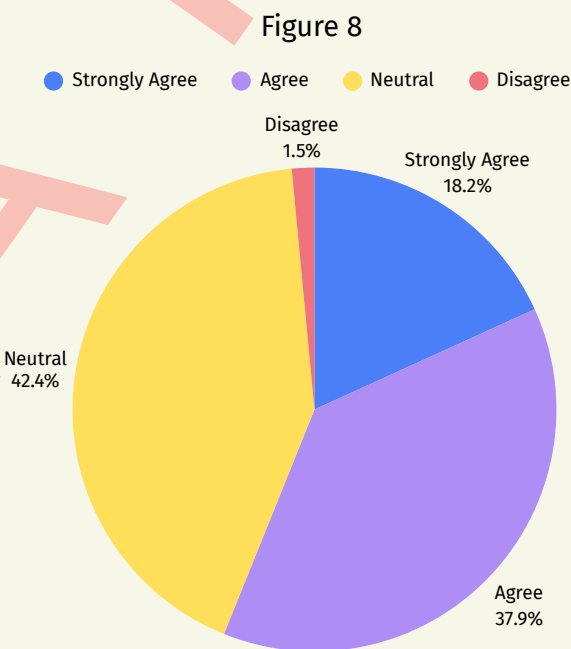
The final group of survey questions examines recent business performance together with the broader external factors that influence long-term economic competitiveness. These responses illustrate how business owners view regulatory conditions, infrastructure, leadership, technological development, and other factors that affect investment decisions and the Territory's long-term economic prospects.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR?



Half of the respondents (50%) remained neutral, indicating no change in their satisfaction level. About a third (33.4%) were either satisfied or very satisfied. However, 16.6% expressed dissatisfaction, reflecting ongoing challenges from the past year (Figure 7).

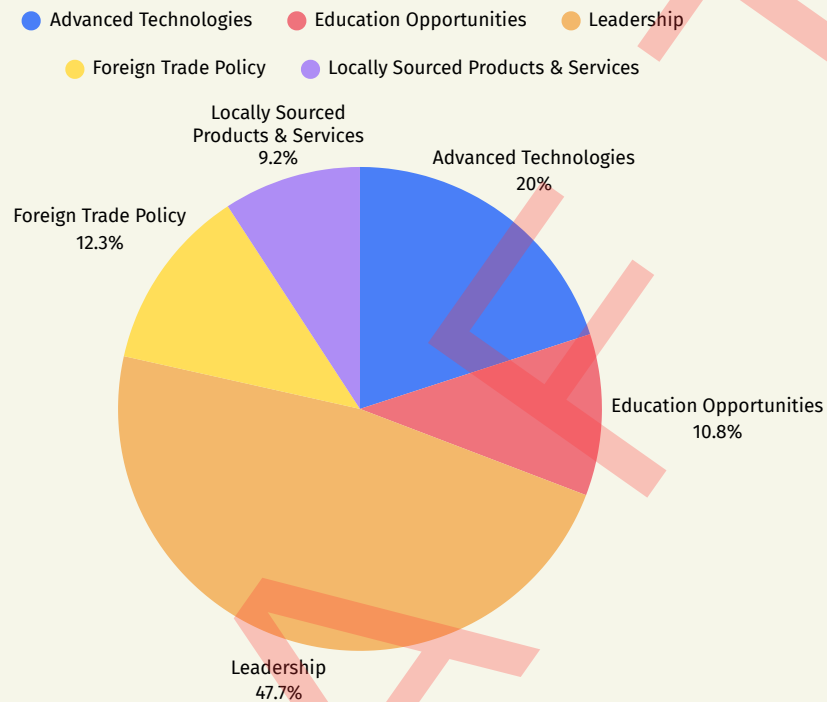
TO WHAT EXTENT DO EXTERNAL FACTORS (E.G., REGULATORY CHANGES AND GLOBAL MARKET TRENDS) IMPACT YOUR BUSINESS CONFIDENCE?



About fifty-six percent (56.1%) agree or strongly agree that external factors such as federal and international regulations and global market conditions impact their business confidence, while 42.4% took a neutral position. Only 1.5% felt that these factors do not influence their business confidence (Figure 8).

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE HAS THE MOST IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY?

Figure 9



First and foremost, strong and effective leadership across government, business, and community sectors was cited by 47.7% of respondents as the most impactful factor, emphasizing the critical role of leaders as strategic and timely decision-makers and good governance in driving sustainable economic growth and social stability. Advanced technological innovations and infrastructure were mentioned by 20% as critical to developing and growing the local economy. Foreign trade policy (12.3%), educational opportunities (10.8%), and locally sourced products and services (9.2%) also contribute to the local economy (Figure 9).

Overall, the Business Climate and Confidence Survey confirms that while American Samoa's business community recognizes important opportunities for future growth, it continues to identify workforce development, infrastructure, business costs, regulatory efficiency, and economic diversification as critical priorities. These findings complement the economic analysis presented in the preceding sections and directly inform the SWOT Analysis and the Strategic Direction, Objectives, and Action Plans presented in the chapters that follow.



❖ SWOT ANALYSIS

The preceding sections have examined American Samoa's economic conditions through historical analysis, current economic trends, and the perspectives of the Territory's business community. The SWOT Analysis integrates these findings into a strategic assessment of the Territory's principal **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**, providing the foundation for the Strategic Direction, Objectives, and Action Plans presented in the next chapter.

The SWOT Analysis was developed through a combination of stakeholder surveys, the Business Climate and Confidence Survey, consultations with government agencies, business leaders, community stakeholders, and subject-matter experts, together with a review of current economic conditions and implementation experience under the previous CEDS. Rather than representing isolated observations, the findings reflect the collective perspectives of participants regarding the factors most likely to influence American Samoa's long-term economic development.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats presented below are ranked according to stakeholder responses and are intended to identify the most significant strategic issues facing the Territory. Together, they provide a practical framework for aligning economic development priorities with available resources, implementation capacity, and long-term economic objectives.

STRENGTHS

ACCESS TO OCEAN RESOURCES

Of the respondents, 70.8% agreed that access to ocean resources is the most significant strength American Samoa has, underlining the importance of marine resources and the fishing industry to The Territory's economy. Tuna exports to the U.S. and the world account for roughly 40-50% of American Samoa's economy. Other potential opportunities in this space include fresh fish exports, aquaculture, renewable energy, and deep-sea mining.

FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

54.6% of respondents cite federal grant programs as a major contributing factor to the economy. The federal government's financial assistance that flowed into American Samoa during and after COVID-19 topped \$1 billion. Other substantial federal grants include the BIL-IRA. Applications to these funding sources are at various stages of processing and approval.

MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S.

The U.S. military and American Samoa forged a special relationship when the main island, Tutuila, was ceded to the U.S., and the U.S. Navy administered American Samoa from 1900 to 1951. During the naval administration of the islands, the Fita Fita Guard reserve unit was established, comprising native Samoans.^[1] The Marine Corps arrived in 1941 in preparation for war, and a Samoan Marine reserve battalion was activated, unofficially known as the "Barefoot Marines."^[2] To this day, the U.S. military is a significant source of employment and educational opportunities, as 52.3% of respondents agreed that American Samoa's relationship with the U.S. military is one of its strengths. The US Army Reserve has a home-based unit, a medical clinic, and a commissary. Moreover, many military retirees have returned home to live, building homes, operating businesses, or taking up a second career in government employment, providing needed skills and contributing to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of life in The Territory.

[1] National Museum of the US Navy News

[2] Task & Purpose Newsletter



“MADE IN THE U.S.” LABEL

Of those surveyed, 48.9% agreed that the “Made in U.S.” label is a strength. This label is one of the main selling points of StarKist canned and pouched tuna in the U.S. and global markets. It also helped StarKist remain resilient in a competitive processed tuna export market over the years. The strength of the U.S. brand is the potential to develop other products to be processed in the territory and market to the U.S. and possibly global or regional markets. The same can be extended to services home-based in the only U.S. territory in the South Pacific.

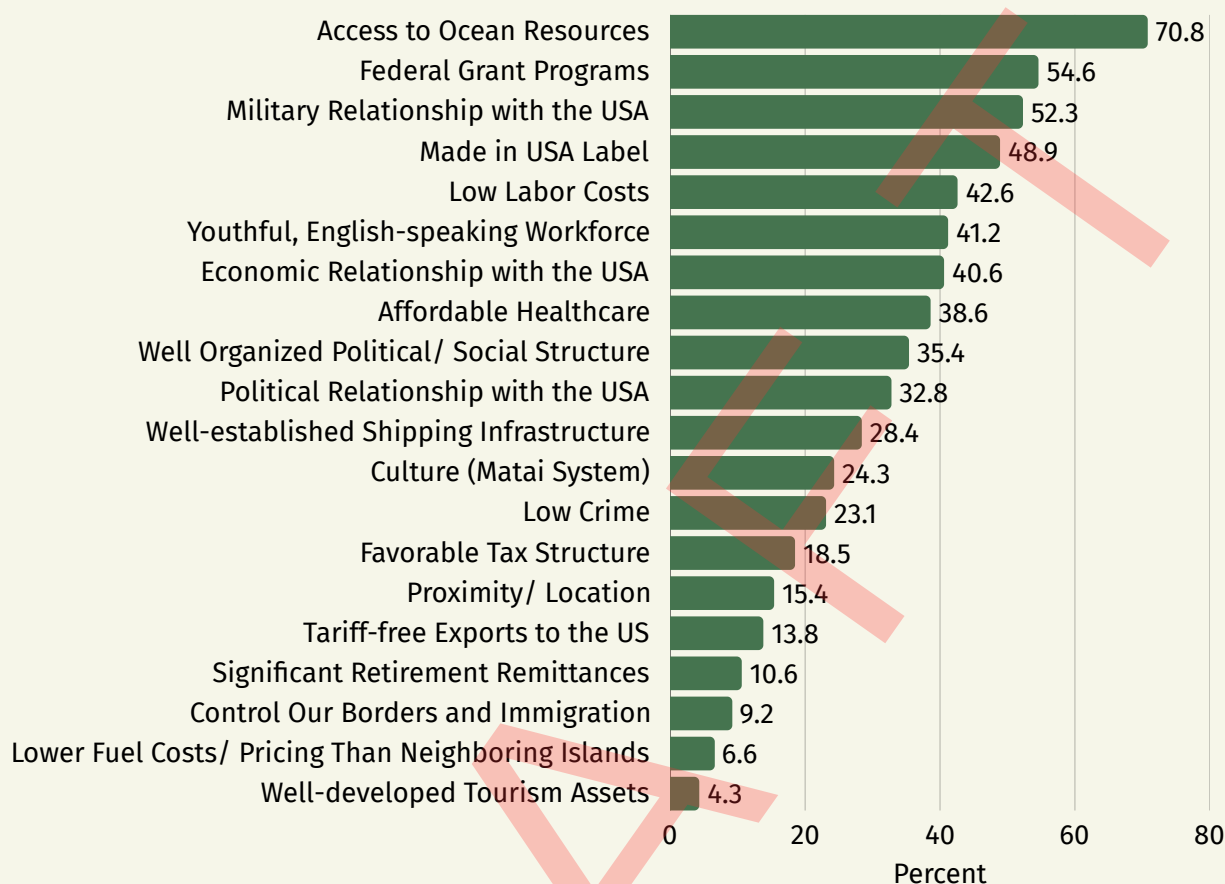
LOW LABOR COSTS

Of those surveyed, 42.6% agreed that relatively lower labor costs in American Samoa compared to the federal minimum wage in the U.S. is a strength American Samoa has over the states and perhaps other territories as a location for American businesses to be situated. This helped explain the closure of the StarKist plant on Terminal Island, California, in 1984 and expanded its operations in American Samoa. Despite fierce competition from low-cost tuna-producing countries in Southeast Asia, the comparatively low labor costs and the “Made in America” brand helped sustain StarKist's operations in American Samoa.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC STRENGTHS

Additional strategic strengths identified by stakeholders include a youthful and English-speaking workforce, affordable healthcare, political and social stability, shipping infrastructure, tariff-free exports to the U.S., and culture.

Figure 10



WEAKNESSES

INEFFICIENCIES WITHIN GOVERNMENT

Inefficiencies within government include a lack of robust government institutions, an absence of strong leadership and good governance, inequitable treatment of citizenry, and misapplication of cultural practices in the administration of government bodies. 58.5% of those surveyed believe this is a significant weakness hindering development and stifling economic growth.

UNDERDEVELOPED TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

55.4% of respondents cite underdeveloped tourism infrastructure as a significant weakness, limiting economic diversification and undermining potential revenue streams.

OUTDATED TAX SYSTEM

55.4% of respondents see outdated tax tables as burdensome on personal and business taxpayers alike and an obstacle to the economy's development and growth.

LIMITED ACCESS TO BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

The same percentage of those surveyed (55.4%) see limited access to banking and financial services as a significant obstacle to business start-ups and sustaining and growing existing businesses.

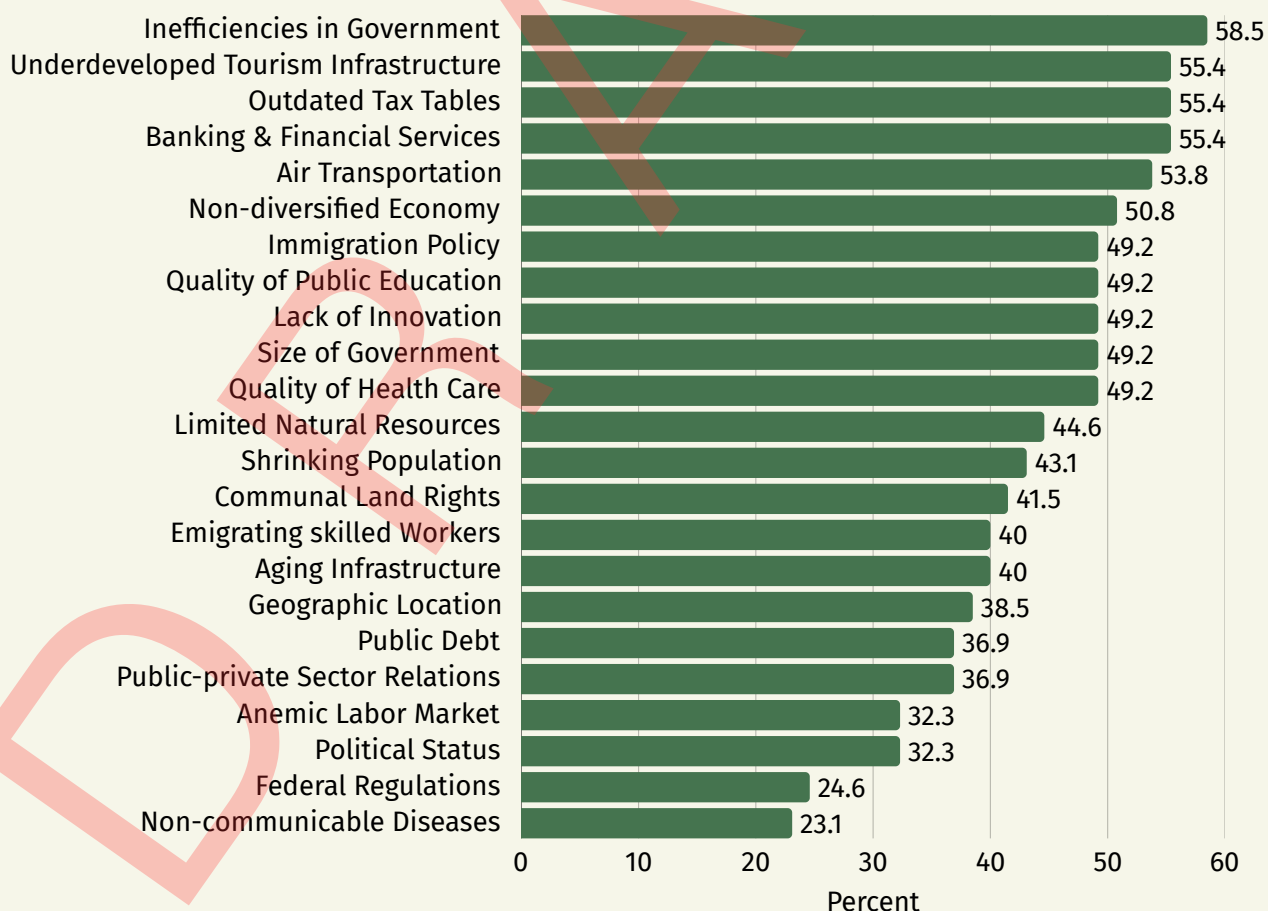
INADEQUATE AIR TRANSPORTATION

53.8% of respondents see inadequate air transportation as restricting connectivity and mobility necessary for developing and growing a fragile insular economy.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC WEAKNESSES

Additional strategic weaknesses identified by stakeholders include the quality of the education system, an inadequate supply of skilled tradespeople, a declining population, weak immigration policy, aging infrastructure, including the main wharf and airport terminal, political status, federal regulations, and non-communicable diseases.

Figure 11



OPPORTUNITIES

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

More than half of respondents (53.8%) agreed leveraging federal programs can inject substantial funding into development projects and social services - fostering sustainable economic development and growth; supporting social stability, health services, and public safety; and promoting climate resilience and food security.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) INDUSTRY

The exact number of those surveyed (53.8%) believe the ICT industry, with the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), can potentially disrupt and drive The Territory's economy exponentially. Being the only U.S. territory below the equator, with access to significant federal grant programs targeting remote rural economies and U.S. technological expertise, American Samoa can develop into a regional technology hub in the South Pacific.

AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY

This industry includes agriculture, hydroponics, aquaponics, and aquaculture (on land, freshwater, and near and offshore mariculture). More than 43% of respondents believe this is a significant opportunity to reduce dependency on imported food and promote sustainable food security.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

More than 42% of those surveyed agreed that tourism is underdeveloped and has untapped potential to contribute markedly to the economy. Aside from general tourism, cruise tourism, and eco-tourism (all have yet to reach their potential), there's sports tourism and military heritage tourism to be developed, and heritage tourism targeting the growing American Samoa global diaspora to tap into. Interviews with local business people in the industry confirm the vast potential of tourism in American Samoa – pointing to the potential of the Pago Harbor as a money maker, the need to survey and rehabilitate the main wharf, cater to the yacht tourism, rehabilitate the Rainmaker Hotel into a four-star hotel and be operated by a brand-name hotel operator, rehabilitate the cable car, the airport terminal. Tourism requires the increased frequency of air transportation between American Samoa and Hawaii, and eventually starting direct flights between American Samoa and the U.S. West Coast.

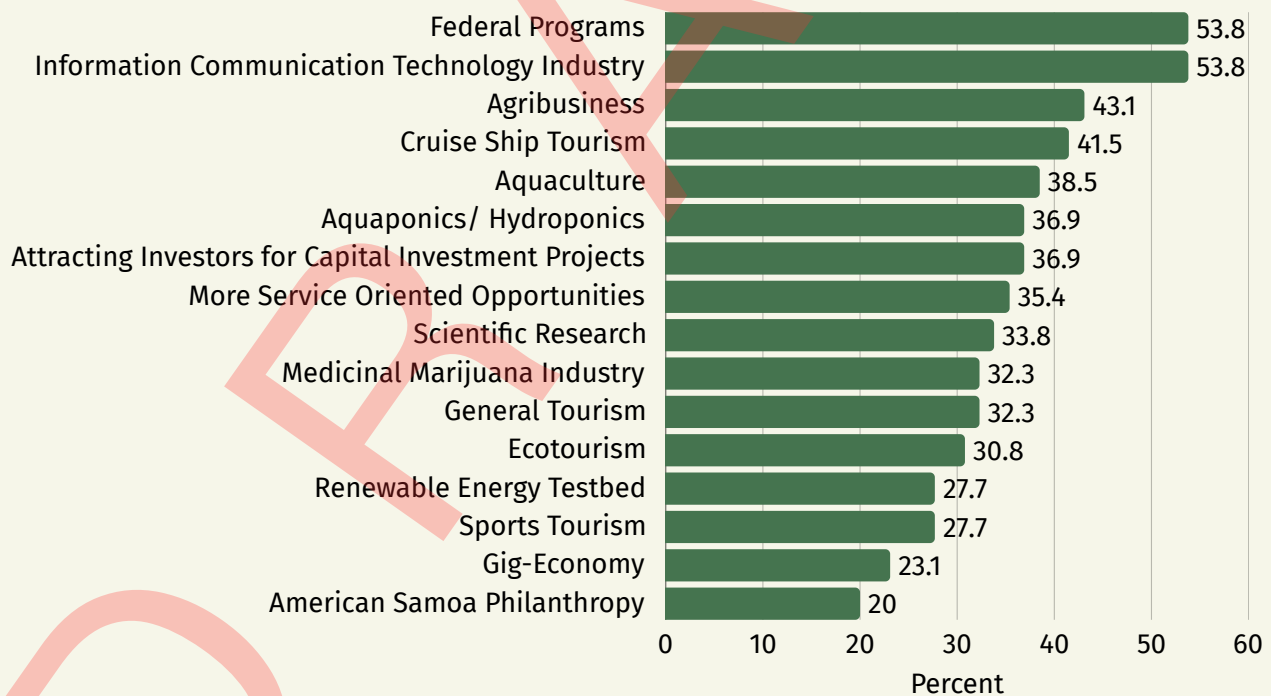
ATTRACTING INVESTORS FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS

About thirty-seven percent (36.9%) of respondents agreed that attracting investors from off-island would be a significant source of funding for development projects and business ventures. The development of American Samoa as a regional technology hub in the South Pacific could attract investors, consulting experts from Silicon Valley, and investors or consultants from elsewhere, including the region. Google and SpaceX have made their presence known in the Pacific region via Google Pacific Connect and Starlink Internet Services.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Additional strategic opportunities identified by stakeholders include developing American Samoa as an outsourcing industry hub, ASCC hosting a scientific research center, a renewable energy testbed location, The Territory as a beneficiary of philanthropic donations, and legalizing the medicinal marijuana industry.

Figure 12



THREATS

INEFFICIENT ALLOCATION OF SCARCE RESOURCES BY GOVERNMENT

An overwhelming number, 73.8% of those surveyed, pointed to the inefficient allocation of scarce government financial resources as the most significant threat to the Territory's economy. The allocation of economic resources refers to the ASG annual budget and the expenditure of said budget. It is unknown whether the construction of the ASG annual budget considers the CEDS goals, objectives, and recommended strategies and actions. The shortage of nurses, medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, and skilled tradespeople has existed for over 30 years, reflecting a disconnect between territorial development plans and strategies and approved government budgets and spending. There seems to be a perennial disconnect between the political cycle expediciencies (of political elections every 4 and 2 years) and the multi-year development plans and strategies put in place for the long-term economic sustainability of the Territory.

DRUG EPIDEMICS

There seems to be no end to the growing drug crisis in the Territory, which is seen by 63% of respondents as a critical threat to the stability and safety of the community and workforce productivity, hence the economy.

STARKIST DEPARTURE

The potential departure of StarKist is a serious threat to the economy and livelihood of the Territory, as expressed by 61.5% of those surveyed. The tuna export industry is one of the two pillars of American Samoa's economy.



INCREASED LOCAL TAXES

61.5% of the respondents saw tax policy as a significant threat, burdening taxpayers and deterring investments. Concerns exist about regressive income tax, tax loopholes, and the enforcement inefficiencies of tax payments and collection.

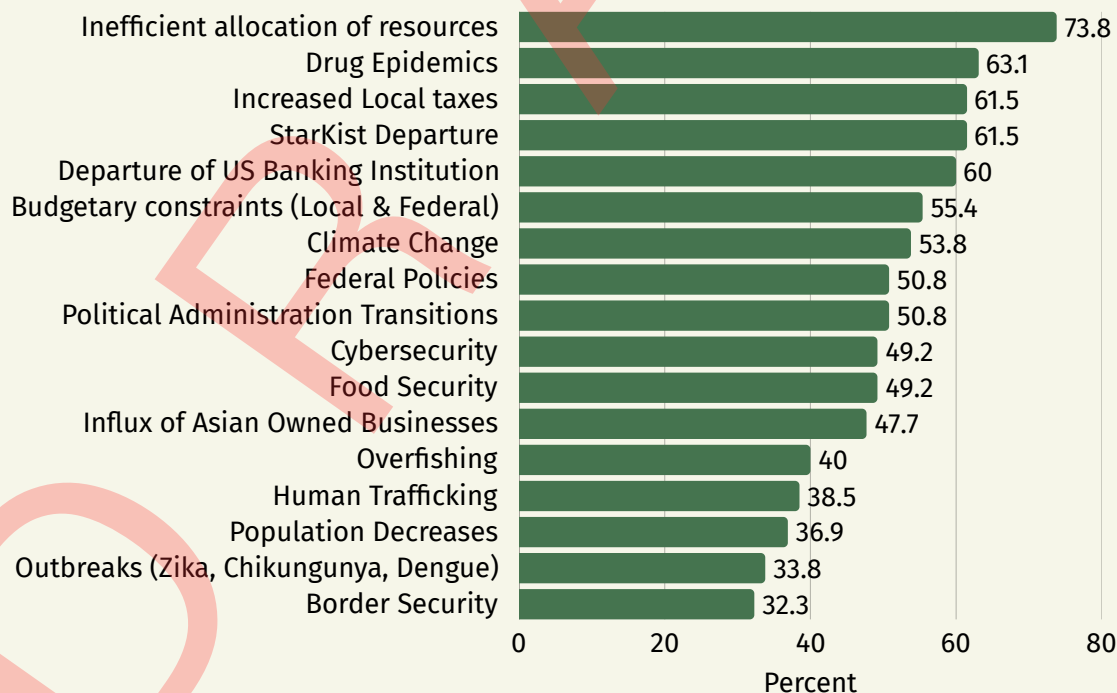
DEPARTURE OF U.S. BANKING INSTITUTIONS

Sixty percent (60%) of those surveyed agreed that the departure of the two FDIC-insured banks - Bank of Hawaii and ANZ Bank was a serious setback for the Territory. The remaining non-FDIC-insured TBAS is left to meet the community's business and personal banking needs.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIC THREATS

Additional strategic threats identified by stakeholders include budgetary construction and constraints, climate change, restrictive federal policies, local and national political administration transitions, cybersecurity, food insecurity, health outbreaks, and declining populations.

Figure 13





❖ STRATEGIC DIRECTION, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLANS

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS-AS) 2026–2031 establishes a coordinated framework for advancing long-term economic growth, improving economic resilience, expanding opportunities for residents and businesses, and strengthening the Territory’s capacity to compete in an increasingly dynamic regional and global economy.

The Strategic Direction, Objectives, and Action Plans presented in this chapter translate the Vision, SWOT Analysis, stakeholder input, and economic assessment into a practical framework for implementation. Together, they identify the Territory’s principal economic development priorities and establish a coordinated approach for achieving sustainable economic growth over the 2026–2031 planning period.

Recognizing that economic development is a continuous process rather than a single initiative, the CEDS emphasizes collaboration among government agencies, private-sector organizations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, community stakeholders, and federal partners. Successful implementation will require coordinated leadership, effective public-private partnerships, strategic investment, and continuous evaluation to ensure that the Territory remains responsive to changing economic conditions and emerging opportunities.

The strategic direction presented in this chapter reflects the findings of the Territorial SWOT Analysis, Business Confidence Survey, demographic and economic trends, infrastructure assessments, workforce needs, and stakeholder consultation conducted during preparation of this CEDS. Collectively, these analyses identified several overarching priorities that will guide implementation throughout the planning period.

These priorities include:

- Strengthening the Territory's business environment and business ecosystem;
- Diversifying the economy while strengthening existing industries;
- Encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation, and private-sector investment;
- Developing a highly skilled and adaptable workforce;
- Modernizing infrastructure and public systems that support economic growth;
- Improving economic resilience through strategic planning and risk reduction;
- Expanding the Territory's capacity to compete for federal and private investment; and
- Strengthening data-informed decision-making through improved economic information systems and performance management.

These priorities recognize that economic growth is achieved not through isolated projects, but through the coordinated interaction of businesses, institutions, infrastructure, workforce development, public policy, and community investment. Accordingly, the CEDS is organized around three complementary strategic goals that collectively provide the framework for achieving the Territory's long-term economic vision.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The three strategic goals presented below provide an integrated framework for strengthening the Territory's business environment, expanding and diversifying its economic base, and reinforcing the workforce, infrastructure, and institutional systems necessary to support sustainable long-term economic growth. Collectively, they establish the foundation for coordinated public investment, private-sector development, strategic partnerships, and continuous performance improvement throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.

GOAL 1 – BUILD A ROBUST BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

This goal focuses on strengthening the policy, regulatory, financial, and institutional environment necessary to encourage entrepreneurship, private investment, business expansion, and long-term economic competitiveness.

GOAL 2 – STRENGTHEN EXISTING INDUSTRIES AND DEVELOP NEW INDUSTRIES

This goal emphasizes economic diversification by supporting the continued competitiveness of established industries while promoting the development of emerging industries capable of expanding employment, increasing investment, and broadening the Territory's economic base.

GOAL 3 – STRENGTHEN SECONDARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

This goal recognizes that long-term economic success depends upon strong infrastructure, effective public institutions, workforce development, reliable economic information, resilient communities, and coordinated public investment. These enabling systems provide the foundation necessary to support implementation of Goals 1 and 2.

While each goal addresses a distinct aspect of economic development, they are intended to function as an integrated strategy. Improvements to the business environment support industry growth; diversified industries create employment and investment opportunities; and strong institutions and infrastructure provide the foundation necessary for sustained economic success.

Together, these goals establish a comprehensive framework for strengthening American Samoa's economy while improving resilience, competitiveness, and quality of life for present and future generations.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE VISION

The Strategic Direction presented in this chapter directly supports the Vision established by this CEDS by promoting a resilient, diversified, innovative, and sustainable economy that creates opportunities for businesses, workers, families, and communities throughout American Samoa.

Implementation of these goals will require collaboration among government agencies, private-sector organizations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, community stakeholders, and federal partners. Equally important, successful implementation will depend upon continuous monitoring, performance measurement, stakeholder engagement, and periodic refinement throughout the planning period.

The following sections present each Strategic Goal, together with the supporting Objectives, Strategies, Representative Actions, and Expected Outcomes that collectively establish the framework for implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2026–2031.



GOAL 1: BUILD A ROBUST BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A strong and competitive private sector depends upon more than individual businesses. It requires a supportive business environment and a functioning business ecosystem that enables entrepreneurs, investors, employers, financial institutions, government agencies, and service providers to operate efficiently and respond to changing economic conditions.

American Samoa's business environment is influenced by laws and regulations, licensing and permitting requirements, access to capital, infrastructure, land availability, operating costs, technology, government services, workforce conditions, and access to reliable economic information. Together, these factors shape the ability of existing businesses to expand, new businesses to enter the market, and investors to pursue opportunities in the Territory.

Goal 1 therefore focuses on strengthening the policy, regulatory, financial, institutional, and service environment necessary to encourage entrepreneurship, investment, business expansion, innovation, and long-term private-sector competitiveness.

BACKGROUND

Previous CEDS planning identified a number of persistent constraints affecting the Territory's business environment. These include regulatory and permitting complexity, limited access to business financing, gaps in modern business services, outdated laws and administrative processes, high operating costs, limited commercial land, weaknesses in economic data collection, and emerging cybersecurity risks.

At the same time, American Samoa has made progress in modernizing selected government services and improving its technological infrastructure. Continued improvements in digital government, telecommunications, financial services, investment promotion, entrepreneurship support, and economic information can strengthen the Territory's competitiveness and reduce barriers to private-sector development.

The business ecosystem must also provide entrepreneurs and established firms with access to financing, technical assistance, reliable information, modern business services, and coordinated government support. Strengthening these systems will improve the Territory's ability to attract investment, encourage local business expansion, and respond more effectively to emerging economic opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1.1 Improve the Territory's regulatory, licensing, and permitting environment.

Objective 1.2 Expand access to business financing and private capital.

Objective 1.3 Strengthen entrepreneurship, innovation, business services, and investment promotion.

Objective 1.4 Reduce structural barriers and operating costs affecting business competitiveness.

Objective 1.5 Strengthen the institutional, information, and coordination systems that support the Territory's business ecosystem.

STRATEGIES

- Review and modernize laws, regulations, licensing requirements, and permitting processes that unnecessarily impede business development;
- Expand digital government services and improve coordination among agencies responsible for business licensing and permitting;
- Strengthen access to capital through DBAS, TBAS, SBA programs, SSBCI, private investment, and other appropriate financing mechanisms;
- Maintain and periodically update a comprehensive Territorial Investment Guide identifying investment opportunities, incentives, regulatory requirements, and advantages of doing business in American Samoa;
- Support entrepreneurs, innovators, start-ups, and existing small businesses through technical assistance, financial education, business development services, and public-private partnerships;
- Expand modern business services, technology adoption, cybersecurity capacity, and digital commerce capabilities;
- Evaluate government-owned property and other available commercial space to support business establishment and expansion;
- Identify opportunities to reduce the cost of doing business, including costs associated with utilities, transportation, regulatory compliance, and administrative processes;
- Strengthen economic and business data collection to support investment, business planning, and public policy decision-making; and
- Improve coordination of federal grants, investment programs, and economic development resources supporting private-sector growth.



REPRESENTATIVE ACTIONS

- Streamline business licensing, land-use permitting, building permitting, and related approval processes;
- Establish measurable targets for reducing permitting and licensing processing times;
- Expand online and integrated government business services;
- Increase access to small-business financing, loan guarantees, revolving loan programs, SSBCI resources, and other sources of capital;
- Update and regularly publish the Territorial Investment Guide;
- Strengthen small-business and entrepreneurship support through DOC, SBDC, financial institutions, educational institutions, and private-sector partners;
- Review outdated laws and regulations for continued relevance and economic impact;
- Assess government-owned properties that may support commercial development and business expansion;
- Encourage improvements in telecommunications, digital business services, cybersecurity, and other infrastructure supporting modern commerce;
- Expand business climate, investment, and economic data collection and reporting; and
- Strengthen coordination of grants and economic development funding opportunities that support private-sector investment.

Detailed implementation responsibilities, performance measures, and implementation schedules are presented in the CEDS implementation framework and associated Goal 1 implementation matrix.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A more efficient and predictable regulatory environment;
- Reduced business licensing and permitting timelines;
- Increased access to financing and investment capital;
- Increased entrepreneurship and small-business development;
- Improved business services and technology adoption;
- Increased local and external private-sector investment;
- Reduced administrative and structural barriers to doing business;
- Better economic information for investors, businesses, and policymakers;
- Stronger coordination among agencies and organizations supporting economic development;
- Improved business confidence and competitiveness; and
- A stronger and more resilient private-sector business ecosystem.

By strengthening the conditions in which businesses operate and invest, American Samoa will create a stronger foundation for industry growth, economic diversification, employment creation, innovation, and long-term economic resilience.

GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN EXISTING INDUSTRIES AND DEVELOP NEW INDUSTRIES

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A resilient economy is one that is both competitive and adaptable. While American Samoa has long benefited from the contributions of its established industries, particularly the tuna industry, long-term prosperity will depend upon the Territory's ability to strengthen existing economic drivers while cultivating new opportunities that expand employment, increase private investment, and broaden the economic base.

Economic diversification is not intended to replace the industries that have sustained the Territory for decades. Rather, diversification builds upon these strengths by encouraging innovation, supporting entrepreneurship, expanding workforce opportunities, and developing complementary industries that enhance long-term economic resilience.

BACKGROUND

American Samoa's economy has historically relied on a limited number of industries and public-sector activity. This concentration has provided important employment and economic stability but has also increased the Territory's vulnerability to changes in global markets, federal policy, supply chains, and natural hazards.

The SWOT Analysis, Business Confidence Survey, and stakeholder engagement conducted during preparation of this CEDS identified numerous opportunities for sustainable economic diversification. These include agriculture, aquaculture, information and communication technology (ICT), artificial intelligence (AI), renewable energy, scientific research, tourism, value-added manufacturing, and other industries that complement the Territory's existing economic strengths.

At the same time, maintaining the competitiveness of existing industries remains essential. Continued investment in the tuna industry, small businesses, agriculture, and supporting service sectors will help preserve employment, strengthen exports, and provide the economic stability necessary for emerging industries to mature.

Accordingly, Goal 2 promotes a balanced strategy that strengthens traditional industries while encouraging innovation and investment in new sectors capable of supporting long-term economic growth.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, the Territory will pursue the following objectives:

Objective 2.1 Strengthen the competitiveness of existing industries.

Objective 2.2 Promote the development of emerging industries.

Objective 2.3 Encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology adoption.

Objective 2.4 Increase private-sector investment and business expansion.

Objective 2.5 Align workforce development with current and future industry needs.



STRATEGIES

The Territory will pursue strategies that:

- Support continued competitiveness of established industries;
- Promote economic diversification through strategic industry development;
- Encourage entrepreneurship and value-added production;
- Advance innovation and technology-driven economic development;
- Expand workforce development aligned with targeted industries;
- Strengthen partnerships among government, educational institutions, and the private sector;
- Promote research, technology transfer, and commercialization; and
- Pursue investment opportunities that strengthen the Territory's long-term economic competitiveness.

REPRESENTATIVE ACTIONS

Representative actions supporting Goal 2 include:

- Support continued modernization and competitiveness of the tuna industry;
- Expand agriculture and food security initiatives;
- Advance commercial aquaculture development;
- Promote information and communication technology (ICT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives;
- Encourage renewable energy and clean technology investments;
- Strengthen tourism infrastructure and visitor experiences;
- Promote workforce alignment with targeted industries;
- Support entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business expansion;
- Encourage scientific research and strategic partnerships; and
- Pursue public and private investment opportunities that support long-term economic diversification.

Detailed implementation responsibilities, performance measures, and implementation schedules are presented in Appendix A.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Successful implementation of Goal 2 is expected to produce:

- Increased economic diversification;
- Stronger existing industries;
- Expanded private-sector investment;
- Increased employment opportunities;
- Improved workforce readiness;
- Greater innovation and technology adoption;
- Enhanced food security;
- Expanded export opportunities;
- Increased business competitiveness; and
- Greater long-term economic resilience.

By strengthening existing industries while developing new opportunities for investment and innovation, American Samoa will broaden its economic base, improve its resilience to external economic shocks, and create sustainable opportunities for future generations.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN SECONDARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Long-term economic growth depends upon more than successful businesses and expanding industries. Sustainable economic development also requires strong public institutions, modern infrastructure, a skilled workforce, reliable economic information, effective governance, and resilient communities. Together, these systems create the enabling environment that allows businesses to invest, workers to succeed, and communities to prosper.

Goal 3 recognizes that investments in these foundational systems are investments in the Territory's long-term economic competitiveness. Strengthening these systems enhances the effectiveness of every other economic development initiative identified throughout this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

BACKGROUND

American Samoa has made significant investments in public infrastructure, education, workforce development, telecommunications, healthcare, and other public services that support economic activity. Continued investment in these systems will be essential to improving productivity, strengthening institutional capacity, expanding economic opportunities, and increasing resilience to future economic and environmental challenges.

The SWOT Analysis, Business Confidence Survey, and stakeholder consultation process identified several systemic constraints that continue to affect economic development. These include transportation limitations, infrastructure needs, workforce shortages, access to technology, institutional capacity, data availability, and coordination among agencies responsible for economic development.

Addressing these foundational issues will improve the Territory's ability to support business growth, attract investment, expand workforce opportunities, and respond effectively to changing economic conditions.

Accordingly, Goal 3 focuses on strengthening the infrastructure, institutions, workforce, information systems, and public services necessary to sustain implementation of Goals 1 and 2 and support long-term economic resilience.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, the Territory will pursue the following objectives:

Objective 3.1 Strengthen critical infrastructure supporting economic development.

Objective 3.2 Develop a highly skilled, adaptable, and competitive workforce.

Objective 3.3 Strengthen government effectiveness and institutional capacity.

Objective 3.4 Improve economic information, planning, and performance management systems.

Objective 3.5 Increase community resilience and long-term sustainability.

STRATEGIES

The Territory will pursue strategies that:

- Modernize transportation, utility, and telecommunications infrastructure;
- Expand workforce education, technical training, and industry partnerships;
- Improve coordination among government agencies supporting economic development;
- Strengthen economic information systems and performance management;
- Expand broadband connectivity and digital transformation;
- Improve resilience planning and hazard mitigation;
- Encourage innovation in public services and institutional management;
- Strengthen partnerships among government, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector; and
- Support long-term strategic planning through data-informed decision-making.

REPRESENTATIVE ACTIONS

Representative actions supporting Goal 3 include:

- Improve transportation and utility infrastructure supporting economic activity;
- Expand broadband access and digital connectivity throughout the Territory;
- Strengthen workforce education and industry partnerships;
- Continue development of the Territorial GDP Proxy Program;
- Continue development of the Household Income Flow Program;
- Publish annual Economic Indicator Reports;
- Conduct periodic Business Confidence Surveys;
- Strengthen interagency coordination and strategic planning;
- Improve resilience planning and hazard mitigation initiatives;
- Expand government capacity through improved technology, planning, and performance management systems; and
- Support implementation of strategic initiatives that improve the Territory's long-term competitiveness.

Detailed implementation responsibilities, performance measures, and implementation schedules are presented in Appendix A.





EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Successful implementation of Goal 3 is expected to produce:

- Stronger public institutions;
- Modernized infrastructure supporting economic development;
- Expanded broadband and digital connectivity;
- Improved workforce readiness;
- Better economic information for planning and investment decisions;
- Enhanced government coordination and institutional effectiveness;
- Increased community resilience;
- More efficient public services; and
- Greater long-term economic sustainability.

By strengthening the public systems and institutional capacity that support economic development, American Samoa will establish the foundation necessary to sustain economic growth, improve competitiveness, respond to future challenges, and enhance opportunities for current and future generations.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Strategic Direction, Objectives, and Action Plans presented in this chapter establish an integrated framework for advancing American Samoa's long-term economic development over the 2026–2031 planning period.

Together, the three Strategic Goals provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to strengthening the Territory's economy.

Goal 1 focuses on creating a competitive business environment and strengthening the business ecosystem necessary to encourage entrepreneurship, investment, innovation, and private-sector growth.

Goal 2 builds upon that foundation by strengthening existing industries while promoting economic diversification through the development of emerging industries, workforce alignment, technology, and strategic investment.

Goal 3 reinforces these efforts by strengthening the infrastructure, institutions, workforce, economic information systems, and public services that enable sustainable economic growth and improve the Territory's long-term competitiveness and resilience.

Collectively, these goals recognize that sustainable economic development is achieved through the coordinated interaction of businesses, government, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, community stakeholders, and federal partners. They further recognize that long-term prosperity depends upon continuous collaboration, informed decision-making, strategic investment, and the ability to adapt to changing economic conditions and emerging opportunities.

Implementation of these Strategic Goals is intended to be dynamic rather than static. As conditions evolve, implementation priorities may be refined while remaining consistent with the Vision, Goals, and guiding principles established by this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Successful implementation therefore requires more than identifying projects and initiatives. It requires an ongoing commitment to performance management, stakeholder engagement, accountability, and continuous improvement. Progress must be measured, implementation evaluated, lessons incorporated, and strategies refined to ensure that the CEDS remains responsive, effective, and relevant throughout the planning period.

Accordingly, the following Evaluation Framework establishes the process through which implementation progress will be monitored, performance measured, stakeholder input incorporated, and outcomes evaluated. Supporting this process, Appendix A – Implementation, Monitoring, Performance Management, and Continuous Improvement Framework provides the operational management structure that guides implementation, annual review, and continuous improvement of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.

TRANSITION TO THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Collectively, Goals 1 through 3 establish an integrated framework for advancing American Samoa's long-term economic development. Goal 1 focuses on strengthening the business environment and business ecosystem; Goal 2 promotes the growth, diversification, and competitiveness of the Territory's economy; and Goal 3 strengthens the infrastructure, institutions, workforce, and enabling systems necessary to sustain long-term economic success.

Together, these goals provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving economic resilience, expanding economic opportunities, encouraging private-sector investment, and enhancing the quality of life for the people of American Samoa.



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS-AS) 2026–2031 is intended to serve as a living strategic management framework that guides economic development decision-making throughout the Territory. Successful implementation requires not only identifying priorities and actions, but also establishing a systematic process to monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and refine implementation over time.

Accordingly, the Department of Commerce (DOC) will employ a comprehensive performance management framework to assess implementation progress throughout the planning period. This framework emphasizes accountability, data-informed decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement.

PURPOSE

The Evaluation Framework is designed to:

- Monitor implementation of the CEDS Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Actions;
- Measure progress toward achieving desired economic development outcomes;
- Inform annual planning, budgeting, and investment decisions;
- Identify implementation challenges and emerging opportunities;
- Support grant development and reporting requirements; and
- Promote continuous improvement throughout the planning period.

The Evaluation Framework recognizes that economic development is an evolving process. As economic conditions, federal priorities, and community needs change, implementation strategies may be refined while remaining consistent with the long-term vision and goals established by this CEDS. Accordingly, the Evaluation Framework is intended to serve as a living management tool, supporting periodic review, performance monitoring, and continuous improvement throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Performance management will occur through four integrated components:

1. IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING

The Department of Commerce will monitor implementation of the principal initiatives identified throughout this CEDS to determine whether planned activities are progressing according to schedule and whether implementation responsibilities are being effectively coordinated among participating agencies and stakeholders.

Monitoring activities will include review of project implementation, grant-funded initiatives, infrastructure investments, workforce development efforts, private-sector initiatives, and other major economic development activities supporting the goals of the CEDS.

2. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The Department of Commerce will utilize quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate changes in the Territory's economic conditions throughout the planning period. Performance indicators may include, but are not limited to:

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Proxy estimates;
- Household Income Flow estimates;
- Employment and labor force indicators;
- Business confidence and investment sentiment;
- Business establishment and expansion activity;
- Industry performance;
- Federal grant investment;
- Infrastructure development;
- Workforce development outcomes; and
- Other economic indicators determined appropriate by the Department of Commerce.

These indicators will provide an objective basis for evaluating economic trends and assessing the effectiveness of CEDS implementation.

3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Implementation of the CEDS requires continued collaboration among government agencies, private-sector organizations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, community organizations, and the public.

- The Department of Commerce will periodically engage stakeholders to:
- Review implementation progress;
- Identify emerging opportunities and challenges;
- Evaluate implementation priorities;
- Recommend improvements; and
- Strengthen coordination among participating organizations.

Stakeholder input will complement quantitative performance measures and contribute to continuous improvement of implementation activities.

4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Performance measurement is intended to support informed decision-making rather than simply document completed activities.

Annual performance reviews will enable the Department of Commerce to:

- Identify successful implementation practices;
- Address implementation barriers;
- Adjust priorities where appropriate;
- Respond to changing economic conditions;
- Pursue emerging funding opportunities; and
- Improve coordination among participating organizations.

This continuous improvement process will help ensure that the CEDS remains relevant and responsive throughout the planning period.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Progress toward implementation of the CEDS will be evaluated using a combination of implementation measures, economic indicators, and outcome measures.

Category	Examples
Implementation Measures	Projects initiated, projects completed, grants awarded, partnerships established
Economic Indicators	GDP Proxy, Household Income Flow, employment, business activity, exports
Infrastructure Measures	Broadband expansion, transportation improvements, utility investments
Workforce Measures	Workforce participation, training programs, industry partnerships
Business Development Measures	Business starts, business expansions, access to financing
Resilience Measures	Hazard mitigation projects, emergency preparedness, infrastructure resilience

Performance measures may be refined during implementation as improved data sources become available.

REPORTING

The Department of Commerce will prepare periodic implementation reviews and performance reports to evaluate progress toward achieving the goals established in this CEDS.

These reviews will consider:

- Implementation status;
- Economic performance indicators;
- Stakeholder feedback;
- Funding opportunities;
- Emerging economic conditions; and
- Recommended implementation adjustments.

The results of these reviews will inform future planning activities and revisions to implementation priorities.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW SCHEDULE

Activity	Frequency
Implementation Review	Annual
Economic Indicator Update	Annual
GDP Proxy Update	Annual
Household Income Flow Update	Annual
Business Confidence Survey	Biennial
SWOT Review	Biennial
Stakeholder Consultation	Annual
Mid-Cycle Evaluation	2028
Final Evaluation	2031

LINK TO IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The implementation, monitoring, performance management, and continuous improvement processes supporting this Evaluation Framework are presented in Appendix A.

Appendix A establishes the operational management framework for implementing this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy by identifying principal implementation initiatives, responsible agencies, performance measures, implementation timelines, annual management processes, and continuous improvement procedures.

Together, the Evaluation Framework and Appendix A provide the management structure necessary to ensure that the CEDS remains an active planning and implementation tool throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.



❖ ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Economic resilience is fundamental to achieving sustainable economic development in American Samoa. Integrating resilience into economic planning helps reduce the risks associated with natural disasters, public health emergencies, global supply chain disruptions, geopolitical events, and other unforeseen challenges that can significantly affect small island economies. Accordingly, resilience is not treated as a separate initiative within this CEDS but as a guiding principle integrated throughout the Territory's long-term economic development strategy.

American Samoa's recent experience demonstrates why resilience planning has become an increasingly important component of long-term economic development.

As noted in the previous CEDS (CEDS-AS 2018–2022), the American Samoa Resiliency Strategy Development Plan (ASRSDP) was born out of Cyclone Gita, which struck American Samoa in February 2018. ASRSDP, a FEMA-led project, sought to transform the Territory's approach to disaster recovery by ensuring that American Samoa is better positioned to withstand and recover from natural disasters, public health emergencies, geopolitical events, and economic disruptions through proactive resilience planning. The plan incorporated strategies across key sectors, including electric power, water, telecommunications, health, transportation, food, housing, finance, education, and culture/history.

ASRSDP strategies proved useful when a series of events beyond the territory's control occurred that required strategic mitigating responses. The pandemic COVID-19 started to impact life in American Samoa when borders were closed in March 2020 – restricting international commerce and transportation for almost three years before restrictions started to relax in December 2022. The Russian-Ukraine war escalated in February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine. The impact of this war on the territory's supply chain network was exacerbated by the dockworkers' disruption of international trade in West Coast ports from Seattle to Long Beach for thirteen months until June 2023.

Between July and October 2022, a swarm of earthquakes (in the 100s) hit the Manu'a islands which caused great concern among the residents of the Manu'a islands and government leaders. The US Geological Survey team out of Hawaii was deployed to the Manu'a Islands immediately and set up a seismic activity monitoring network on the Manu'a Islands and certain parts of Tutuila, whereby volcanic, earthquake, and tsunami activity could be monitored from afar for not only American Samoa but across the southwest Pacific region. On the local front, ASG expended a significant amount of funds (in the millions) to construct access roads to higher grounds and shore up coastal lines to mitigate erosion and minimize the impact of the sea level rising for coastal villages in Manu'a.



American Samoa has an enviable history of being proactive and resilient in times of global crisis in its policy-making and implementing such policies on time. The population of the territory was protected from the deadly influenza pandemic of 1918 when the Naval territorial government at the time instituted a quarantine, while it claimed 8,500 lives in Samoa (one-fifth of Samoa's population), 675 thousand people in the United States, and 21 million people globally. Due to the ASG Department of Health's vaccination program that was carried out on time, the territory was insulated from the measles epidemic that cost the lives of 83 children in Samoa in early 2018. American Samoa was one of the last countries or territories in the world to contract COVID-19, and that is attributed to its well-planned and timed, well-coordinated, and well-funded response to this global pandemic that lasted three years and claimed more than a million lives globally.

As part of its ongoing resilience planning efforts, the American Samoa Government (ASG) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2024 to examine the supply chain challenges facing the Territory. The results of this study will help inform strategies and action plans designed to reduce risks and strengthen the Territory's ability to meet the essential needs of the community during natural disasters, public health emergencies, and geopolitical disruptions.

Together with the strategies outlined throughout this CEDS, these efforts will strengthen the Territory's ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from future disruptions while maintaining long-term economic growth and enhancing the Territory's overall economic resilience.

American Samoa, as a full member of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), South Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP), a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), and recently an associate member of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations and vision for what they need to do to achieve sustainable development:

- Resilient economies – seek a well-diversified economy inclusive of sustainable tourism, appropriate trade and investments, sustainable development of ocean resources, and appropriate technological advancements.
-
- Safe and prosperous societies – build healthcare access, and robust and transparent institutions, foster and promote good governance, and achieve equality and empowerment for all citizens.
-
- A secure future – develop a sustainable future through renewable energy, managing food and water resources, building resilient infrastructure, and ensuring improved transportation and connectivity for all.
-
- Environmental protections and planetary sustainability – advocate for urgent action on climate change, sustainable ocean management, biodiversity restoration, and prioritizing disaster risk reduction strategies.^[1]

The resilience strategies described throughout this chapter reinforce the broader goals of the CEDS-AS 2026–2031. By integrating resilience into economic planning, infrastructure investment, workforce development, environmental stewardship, and institutional decision-making, American Samoa will be better positioned to withstand future disruptions while continuing to build a stronger, more diversified, and sustainable economy for future generations.

[1] [sustainabledevelopment.un.org › content › documents › 2125203](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2125203)

APPENDIX A

CEDS IMPLEMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

The CEDS Implementation and Performance Management Framework provides the operational roadmap for implementing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of American Samoa (CEDS-AS) 2026–2031. It establishes the management processes through which the Territory will coordinate implementation, monitor progress, evaluate performance, engage stakeholders, and continuously refine economic development priorities.

The Department of Commerce will utilize this framework as a living management tool supporting annual implementation reviews, strategic decision-making, interagency coordination, performance reporting, and future CEDS updates.

FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

- Provide a structured process for implementing the CEDS strategic goals and action plans.
- Promote accountability through measurable performance indicators.
- Support coordinated implementation among territorial agencies and partner organizations.
- Facilitate annual review, reporting, and continuous improvement.
- Maintain alignment with EDA guidance throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.

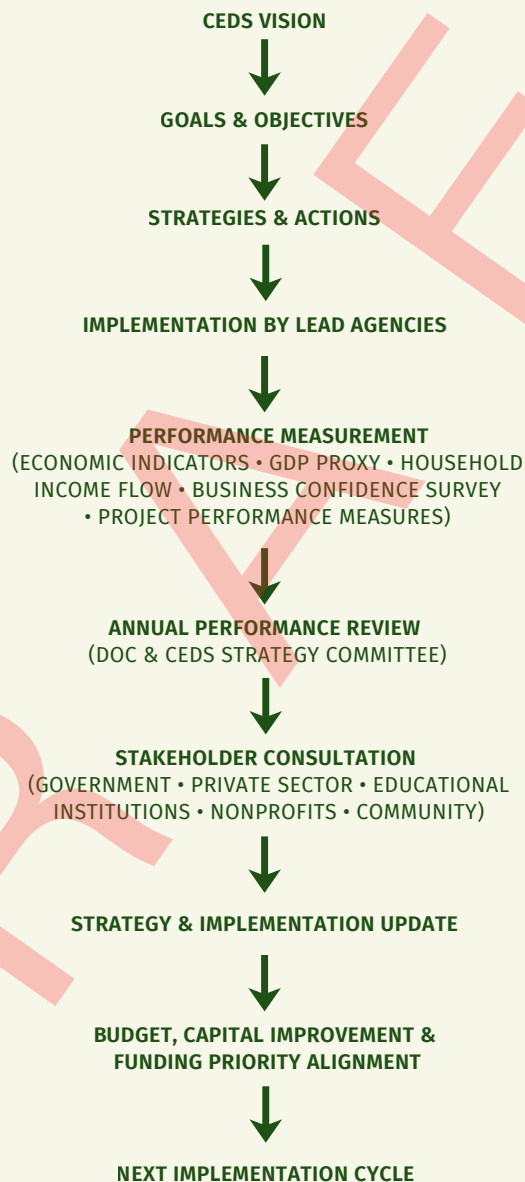
CONCLUSION

This framework establishes the operational foundation for translating the Territory's strategic vision into measurable results and is intended to serve as a living management tool throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.

CEDS IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is intended to function as a continuous management process rather than a static planning document. Successful implementation requires continuous planning, execution, monitoring, evaluation, stakeholder engagement, and refinement throughout the planning period.

The Department of Commerce will utilize the following continuous improvement framework.



This continuous improvement framework enables the Territory to assess implementation progress annually, identify opportunities for improvement, adjust priorities where appropriate, pursue emerging funding opportunities, and maintain alignment with the long-term economic development vision established by this CEDS.

IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONES

Year	Major Milestone
2026	Launch implementation of the revised CEDS-AS 2026–2031
2027	First Annual Implementation Review and Performance Assessment
2028	Mid-Cycle Strategic Review and Adjustment
2029	Update implementation priorities based on economic conditions and performance
2030	Preliminary evaluation and begin planning for the next CEDS cycle
2031	Final evaluation and development of CEDS 2032–2037

GOAL 1: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

BUILD A ROBUST BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

Major Initiative	Lead Agency	Supporting Agencies	Performance Measures	Potential Funding Sources	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Improve business regulatory environment	DOC	GO/ FONO	Regulatory improvements adopted	Local Appropriations	●	●				
Improve permitting and licensing efficiency	DOC	PERMITTING AGENCIES	Reduced permitting timelines	Local, EDA	●	●	●			
Expand business financing opportunities	DOC	DBAS/ TBAS/ SBA	Increased financing availability	SBA, SSBCI, Private Investment	●	●	●	●	●	●
Update Territorial Investment Guide	DOC	ASCOC	Updated investment guide published	Local	●		✓		✓	
Strengthen Grants Clearinghouse coordination	GO/ DOC	ALL AGENCIES	Increased grant applications and awards	Federal Programs	●	●	●	●	●	●

KEY: ● = Implementation/ Ongoing Activity ; ✓ = Major Milestone or Deliverable

GOAL 2: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

STRENGTHEN EXISTING INDUSTRIES AND DEVELOP NEW INDUSTRIES

Major Initiative	Lead Agency	Performance Measures	Potential Funding Sources	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Support tuna industry competitiveness	DOC	Export performance	Private, Federal	●	●	●	●	●	●
Expand agriculture initiatives	DOA	Local agricultural production	USDA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Develop commercial aquaculture	DOC / Private Sector	Commercial production	EDA, USDA, Private Investment	●	●	●	●	●	
Advance ICT and Artificial Intelligence initiatives	DOC / ASCC / ASTCA	Technology projects implemented	NSF, EDA, Private	●	●	●	●	●	●
Implement Workforce Alignment Strategy	DHR / DOC	Workforce performance indicators	WIOA, DOL	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tourism infrastructure planning	DOC / DPA / DPW	Priority projects initiated	EDA, DOI/OIA	●	●	●			

KEY: ● = Implementation/ Ongoing Activity ; ✓ = Major Milestone or Deliverable

GOAL 3: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

STRENGTHEN SECONDARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Major Initiative	Lead Agency	Performance Measures	Potential Funding Sources	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Expand broadband infrastructure	ASTCA	Broadband access	NTIA, USDA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Improve transportation infrastructure coordination	DPA/ DPW	Capital projects completed	FAA, FHWA, EDA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Strengthen workforce education partnerships	DOE/ ASCC	Workforce training programs	WIOA, DOE	●	●	●	●	●	●
Expand territorial economic data systems	DOC	Annual economic reports published	Local, EDA	●	●	●	●	●	●
Improve resilience planning	DOC / Homeland Security	Updated resilience plans	FEMA	●	●	●	●	●	●

KEY: ● = Implementation/ Ongoing Activity ; ✓ = Major Milestone or Deliverable

ANNUAL ECONOMIC MONITORING ACTIVITIES

Activity	Frequency	Lead Agency
Territorial GDP Proxy Update	Annual	DOC
Household Income Flow Estimates	Annual	DOC
Territorial Economic Indicators Report	Annual	DOC
Business Confidence Survey	Biennial	DOC
SWOT Assessment Review	Biennial	DOC
CEDS Performance Report	Annual	DOC
Stakeholder Consultation Meeting	Annual	DOC
CEDS Strategy Committee Review	Annual	DOC

ANNUAL CEDS MANAGEMENT CYCLE

Period	Activity
January	Review previous year's implementation progress
February–March	Update GDP Proxy and Household Income Flow estimates
April	Convene CEDS Strategy Committee and stakeholder consultation
May–June	Publish Annual Economic Indicators Report
July	Review Implementation Matrix and update as appropriate
August–September	Identify priority EDA and federal funding opportunities
October	Prepare Annual CEDS Performance Report
November	Integrate findings into agency planning and budget recommendations
December	Publish Annual Progress Report and establish implementation priorities for the following year

PERFORMANCE REVIEW SCHEDULE

Review	Timing
Annual Performance Review	Every January
Annual Stakeholder Consultation	Annually
Mid-Cycle Evaluation	2028
Final Evaluation	2031
Development of CEDS 2032–2037	2031

IMPLEMENTATION NOTES

1. DETAILED OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND ACTIONS SUPPORTING EACH INITIATIVE ARE PRESENTED WITHIN THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND ACTION PLANS SECTION OF THIS CEDS.
2. APPENDIX A SUMMARIZES THE TERRITORY'S PRINCIPAL IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES AND SERVES AS THE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION.
3. THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WILL REVIEW THIS FRAMEWORK ANNUALLY AND UPDATE IT AS APPROPRIATE BASED UPON IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS, STAKEHOLDER INPUT, EMERGING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.
4. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS WILL EVALUATE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND RECOMMEND ADJUSTMENTS TO PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION.
5. INFORMATION GENERATED THROUGH THE TERRITORIAL GDP PROXY PROGRAM, HOUSEHOLD INCOME FLOW ESTIMATES, BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY, SWOT ASSESSMENTS, AND OTHER ECONOMIC INDICATORS WILL INFORM ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWS AND FUTURE REVISIONS OF THE CEDS.

CONCLUSION

The American Samoa Department of Commerce recognizes that successful economic development requires continuous planning, collaboration, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment. Accordingly, this Implementation, Monitoring, Performance Management, and Continuous Improvement Framework is intended to ensure that the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy remains an active management tool that guides economic development decisions, informs investment priorities, supports grant development, and promotes accountability throughout the 2026–2031 planning period.

Through annual performance reviews, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring of key economic indicators, the Territory will periodically refine implementation priorities to respond to changing economic conditions while remaining focused on achieving the long-term vision established by this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

APPENDIX B

BUSINESS CLIMATE AND CONFIDENCE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Q1: How would you best describe the current state of the American Samoa economy?
(Strong, Moderate, Stable, Uncertain, Weak)

Q2: Where do you see the American Samoa economy in the future (5 years)?
(Strong Growth, Moderate Growth, Stable, Moderate Decline, Strong Decline)

Q3: How confident are you with the prospect of reinvesting in the expansion or growth of your business/organization?
(Extremely Confident, Fairly Confident, Neutral, Fairly Worried, Extremely Worried)

Q4: How confident are you about your business prospects over the next 12 months?
(Extremely Confident, Fairly Confident, Neutral, Fairly Worried, Extremely Worried)

Q5: If confident, reason for confidence (check mark all that applicable)
(Strong customer relations, Business opportunity, Strong market position, been in business a long time, plenty of work coming up, Favorable business environment, Strong local economy, Increased public works, good profitability)

Q6: If concerned, the reasons for being concerned (if applicable) check mark all that applicable
(Lack of suitably skilled workers, increasing business costs, Government red tape, decrease in business/sales, Decrease in public works, Low profitability, too much competition, Weak local economy)

Q7: How satisfied are you with your current business performance compared to the previous year?
(Extremely Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Extremely Dissatisfied)

Q8: To what extent do you feel that external factors (e.g., regulatory changes, market trends) impact your business confidence?
(Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Q9: What do you believe has the most impact on the local economy?
(Advanced technologies, education opportunities, leadership, foreign trade policy, Locally Sourced Products & Services)

Q10: As the American Samoa economy emerges from the pandemic, in your opinion, what are the major strengths of the territory? (Please rank the following with 1 being the most significant and 5 being the least significant)

- ___ Access to Ocean Resources
- ___ Federal Grant Programs
- ___ Made in USA Label
- ___ Military Relationship with the USA
- ___ Low Labor Costs
- ___ Political Relationship with the USA
- ___ Tariff-free Exports to the US
- ___ Well-established Shipping Infrastructure
- ___ Lower Fuel Costs/Pricing Than Neighboring Islands
- ___ Youthful, English-speaking Workforce
- ___ Economic Relationship with the USA
- ___ Significant Retirement Remittances
- ___ Control Our Borders and Immigration
- ___ Culture (Matai System)
- ___ Low Crime
- ___ Well-developed Tourism Assets
- ___ Favorable Tax Structure
- ___ Proximity/Location
- ___ Affordable Health Care
- ___ Well Organized Political/Social Structure

Any other opinion (PLEASE SPECIFY): _____

Q11: As the American Samoa economy emerges from the pandemic, in your opinion, what are the major weaknesses facing the territory? (Please rank the following with 1 being the most significant and 5 being the least significant.)

- ___ Air Transportation
- ___ Banking and Financial Services
- ___ Inefficiencies in Government
- ___ Non-diversified Economy
- ___ Quality of Health Care
- ___ Public-private Sector Relations
- ___ Outdated Tax Tables
- ___ Size of Government
- ___ Lack of Innovation
- ___ Quality of Public Education
- ___ Underdeveloped Tourism Infrastructure
- ___ Federal Regulations
- ___ Limited Natural Resources

- ___ Non-communicable Diseases
- ___ Geographic Location
- ___ Aging Infrastructure
- ___ Immigration Policy
- ___ Political Status
- ___ Public Debt
- ___ Anemic Labor Market
- ___ Communal Land Rights
- ___ Emigrating skilled Workers
- ___ Shrinking Population

Any other opinion (PLEASE SPECIFY): _____

Q12: As the American Samoa economy emerges from the pandemic, in your opinion, what are the major opportunities available for development in the territory? (Please rank the following with 1 being the most significant and 5 being the least significant)

- ___ Information Communication Technology Industry
- ___ Attracting Investors for Capital Investment Projects
- ___ General Tourism
- ___ Ecotourism
- ___ Federal Programs
- ___ Scientific Research
- ___ Agribusiness
- ___ Aquaculture
- ___ Medicinal Marijuana Industry
- ___ Sports Tourism
- ___ Renewable Energy Testbed
- ___ Aquaponics/Hydroponics
- ___ American Samoa Philanthropy
- ___ Cruise Ship Tourism
- ___ "Gig-Economy"
- ___ More Service Oriented Opportunities

Any other opinion (PLEASE SPECIFY): _____

Q13: As the American Samoa economy emerges from the pandemic, in your opinion, what are the major threats facing the territory? (Please rank the following with 1 being the most significant and 5 being the least significant)

- ☐ Departure of US Banking Institution
- ☐ Political Administration Transitions
- ☐ Budgetary constraints (Local & Federal)
- ☐ StarKist Departure
- ☐ Drug Epidemics
- ☐ Population Decreases
- ☐ Climate Change
- ☐ Overfishing
- ☐ Federal Policies
- ☐ Human Trafficking
- ☐ Food Security
- ☐ Cybersecurity
- ☐ Outbreaks (Zika, Chikungunya, Dengue)
- ☐ Border security
- ☐ Influx of Asian Owned Businesses
- ☐ Increased Local taxes
- ☐ Inefficient allocation of financial resources

Any other opinion (PLEASE SPECIFY): _____

APPENDIX C

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

INTRODUCTION

The CEDS-AS 2026–2031 builds upon stakeholder engagement conducted during preparation of the original CEDS while incorporating substantial technical analysis, strategic refinement, editorial review, and publication development undertaken during this update.

PART I – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Throughout this project, discussions and interviews were held by the CEDS project contractor with government and business leaders, academics, consultants, and community leaders to garner a better sense of their insights and feedback regarding the resilience and sustainability of the Territory's economy. The CEDS AS-2023-2027 was written, utilizing said information and data received from the surveys, relevant existing plans and reports, and historical and data analysis. The participants, listed below, are duly acknowledged by the American Samoa Department of Commerce, for their contribution to the CEDS and the implementation of CEDS strategies and actions that have started to the end of 2027.

Name	Title	Organization
Petti Matila	Former Director	ASG Dept. of Commerce
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Faleosina Voigt	Former Director	ASG Dept. of Public Works

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Motusa Nua	Former Director	ASG Dept. of Health
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Carlos Sanchez	Director	American Samoa Shipyard Services Authority (ASSSA)

Minnie Tuia	Director	American Samoa Visitors' Bureau (ASVB)
Ruth Matagi	President	Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS)
Owen Peery	President & CEO	Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS)
Jason Betham	Director Chairman	Small Business Dev. Center AS Chamber of Commerce
Peter Crispin	CEO	Tool Shop
Tom Drabble	CEO/ Hotelier	Sadie's Hotels
Solip Hong	General Manager	KS Mart
Ziggy Volrath	Manager	ICS Cargo Support
Tufuga F. Palepua	Production Manager	Star Kist Samoa
Howard Helg	CEO	VCX Technologies
Justin Tuiasosopo	Former CEO/ President	BlueSky American Samoa
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Scott Burch	Superintendent	US National Parks of American Samoa
Atuatasi Lelei Peau	Superintendent	National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, NOAA
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Elinor Lutu-McMoore	Meteorologist in Charge (MIC)	National Weather Service, NOAA, US Dept. of Commerce
Maria Haws, PhD	Professor	University of Hawaii at Hilo

Harry Ako, PhD	Professor (Retired)	University of Hawaii at Manoa
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Sreenivasan S. Panickar, PhD	Program Director	Dept of Education, ASG
Sudhir Ispahani	CEO	Alpha Global Partners
Vipin Narendran	Founding Director	ITGalax
Mike Baukes	Co-Founder & CEO	UpGuard

PART II – CEDS-AS 2026–2031 PROJECT LEADERSHIP AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

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- Uili Leauanae, *Deputy Director*
- Reinet V. Thompson-Niko, *Deputy Director*

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- Mine Timoteo, *Chief Statistician*
- Peter Ott Jr., *Assistant Chief*

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- Char Matila – Independent Technical Review
- Fuiavailili Keniseli Lafaele – Strategic Development, Economic Analysis, Editorial Integration

Government Coordination

- Governor's Office
- Governor's Office – Grants Management

Federal Technical Assistance

U.S. Economic Development Administration (Seattle Regional Office)

APPENDIX D

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

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TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT

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