

STATEMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

4.0 LABOR FORCE

Labor force is defined by the Department of Labor as those persons who are employed and those persons who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. The combined total labor force in Eddy and Lea Counties is approximately 40,700. The annual average labor force in Lea County in 1976 was approximately 22,700, while in Eddy County the labor force was about 18,000. In 1976 total employment in the two-county area was 38,500.

The combined unemployment rate for the two counties was just over 5.3 percent. However, the unemployment rate varies significantly between the counties. Since 1973, when the economy of both Eddy and Lea Counties began to pick up, the total labor force has grown approximately 13 percent, or by roughly 4,700 individuals in the three-year period. Thus, the annual average growth rate in the labor force has been approximately 4 percent. The overall growth of employment in the area for the three-year period was 11.6 percent, which indicates an annual average growth rate in employment somewhat less than 4 percent. Therefore, the number of persons unemployed and the unemployment rate have been steadily increasing for the last three years.

4.1 EMPLOYMENT

Examination of employment by sector in the two counties shows that mining is, by far, the largest employer of the identified sectors. Manufacturing and agriculture, other basic sectors in the area, appear to have