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***Santa Cruz County
Workforce Development Board
2025-2028 Local Plan***

Contact:

*Andy Stone, Director
(831) 763-8824*

Andy.stone@santacruzcountyca.gov



Local Plans

The Local Plan demonstrates operational alignment with the strategic objectives of the respective Regional Plan, drives coordination with local partners, and highlights key service delivery strategies. Service delivery is typically integrated at the local level, where resources are braided, and support is provided to participants through workforce system partners. Local Plans should address partnerships established under the previous Local and Regional Planning and Modification processes, including WIOA core and required program partners and state strategic partnerships. Local Boards are also encouraged to address any additional partnership efforts taking place at the local level, if applicable.

The Local Plan process is not meant to place an additional administrative burden on programs providing critical services to the public. Instead, it is intended to facilitate communication across systems to improve service coordination and identify unintended barriers to equitable access to economic stability and self-sufficiency. Accordingly, Local Boards and their partners have flexibility in determining each partnership's nature, scope, and depth based on local needs and priorities.

WIOA Core and Required Partner Coordination

Under WIOA, the ultimate vision is for core and required programs to operate as a unified system, strategically assessing and responding to the needs of workers and employers and aligning them with service strategies. This section of the Local Plan should address coordination with the following WIOA core and required program partners identified under WIOA Section 121:

- *WIOA Title II - Adult Education and Literacy*
- *WIOA Title III - Wagner-Peyser*
- *WIOA Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation*
- *Carl Perkins Career Technical Education*
- *Title V Older Americans Act*
- *Job Corps*
- *Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166)*
- *Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (WIOA Section 167)*
- *Veterans*
- *Youth Build*
- *Trade Adjustment Assistance Act*
- *Community Services Block Grant*
- *Housing and Urban Development*
- *Unemployment Compensation*
- *Second Chance*
- *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs*

The Local Plan should address the following:

- ***How Local Boards and AJCC partners will coordinate the services and resources identified in their MOU, as outlined in WIOA Memorandums of Understanding (WSD18-12).***

Staff of the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board (SCCWDB) work with WIOA partners to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, with a particular emphasis on those with barriers to employment. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with its America's Job Center (AJCC) partners, the local workforce development system works in coordination with all required WIOA partners and other local key partners. The 2022 MOU partners are as follows:

- WIOA Title I.B: Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth Programs (WDB)
- WIOA Title II: Adult Education and Literacy (Santa Cruz Adult Education Consortium)
- WIOA Title III Employment Services; Veterans Services; Trade Adjustment Assistance Act; programs under state Unemployment Insurance (Employment Development Department)
- WIOA Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation (Department of Rehabilitation)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs (County of Santa Cruz, Department of Human Services)
- Title V of Older Americans Act (Peninsula Family Service)
- Postsecondary career and technical education under the Perkins Act (Cabrillo College)
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (Center for Employment Training)
- Employment & Training programs under Community Service Block Grant (Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Inc.)
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-Administered Employment & Training Programs (Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz)
- Jobs Corps became party to the 2022 MOU via an addendum to the 2022 MOU. Job Corps is the largest free residential education and job training program for Young Adults aged 16-24. Interested individuals may go online to [jobcorps.gov](https://www.jobcorps.gov) to learn more about Job Corps and apply.
- Southern California American Indian Resource (SCAIR) was approved by the Department of Labor for an expansion of its Native NewWORKS Program services.

Changes to the MOU partners since 2022:

- Peninsula Family Services is no longer providing workforce services in Santa Cruz County.
- SER National, which was offering Employment & Training Services, Career Services and Training Services through their National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) Grants, SER Jobs for Progress, a partner as of 2022, is no longer providing services in Santa Cruz County.

We have no new partners to the MOU since 2022. CET is now doing the work that SER National was doing in 2022. The MOU will be updated in 2025.

Other partners in the system, not a party to the MOU but actively working with the AJCCs include:

- Native American Programs - WASHOE Tribal TANF (a tenant of EDD).

The partners, as described in the MOU, serve those with barriers to employment through a number of strategies, including, but not limited to:

- WIOA - Employment and training resources and services for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth customers. Services include job search support; training services; supportive services; referral to other community resources for wrap-around support. Providing the full spectrum of WIOA youth services including job

preparedness opportunities. Services available at the comprehensive AJCC in Watsonville, affiliate office in Capitola and satellite center for WIOA Youth services in Freedom.

- Adult Literacy (Santa Cruz Adult Education Consortium) - Instructional programs for the high school equivalency test; English as a Second Language courses.
- Employment Development Department - Employment Services (including but not limited to CalJOBS and labor exchange services, Unemployment Insurance services, California Training Benefits, and Rapid Response), Veterans Services, Labor Market Information, Employer Informational Services, and Trade Adjustment Act assistance. State Disability Insurance Program application and access point. Job Search Assistance Workshops. Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers services, including referrals to supportive services and training opportunities, job search assistance, information on employment rights, and more.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (Department of Rehabilitation) - Assistance to those with a documented disability, including guidance counseling, job placement assistance and job coaching. Pre-employment transition services for youth. Supportive services. Training funds, including on the job training.
- TANF (Human Services Department) – Cash aid for low-income families; connection to a wide range of wrap around services; and a variety of job assistance services including assessment, individualized employment plan development, supportive services information, workforce preparation workshops and job search assistance.
- Title V Older Americans Act (Peninsula Family Service) - Workforce preparation. Financial literacy assistance. Job search assistance. Supportive services information.
- Carl Perkins Career Technical Education (Cabrillo College) – Education and vocational training. Case management and emotional support. Tutoring. Financial literacy.
- Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (Center for Employment Training) -Information and referral system; UI application/access point; WIOA/MSFW Program eligibility determination; Skill and Career Assessments; CalJOBSSM assistance; WIOA basic and individualized career services; Individualized Employment Plan and Counseling; Skills Training and Short-term training programs; CPR Certifications; In-house supportive services, e.g. stipends; Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) courses; financial aid/ Pell Grants; instructional programs for High School Equivalency (GED); Human Development Sessions: e.g. financial literacy; life skills workshops; Testing site: Job Placement assistance services for participants; Follow-up assistance -post training.
- Community Services Block Grant (Community Action Board) - Day worker center; rental assistance for low-income families with children 0-17, disabled individuals and/or 60 years or older; youth employment readiness and job placement services, subsidized employment for CalWORKs eligible participants, immigration and legal advice/support services, emergency payments for services, information and referrals to support the continuation of employment and educational goals for participants referred by the county's CalWORKs program; Youth Homeless Response Team (YHRT) unaccompanied, unhoused youth ages 15-24; Watsonville Works! Work experience opportunities for homeless individuals.

- Housing Authority - Housing Plus for those in the Housing Choice Voucher and Low Income Public Housing Programs.

In addition to SCCWDB and its Committee meetings, in which required partners participate, WFSCC has many systematic means to support service alignment. This includes quarterly Career Center (One-Stop) Operator meetings attended by MOU partners plus service providers in the Career Centers, including the contracted WIOA service provider, Goodwill Central Coast, and other service providers such as Santa Cruz County Office of Education-Sueños Youth Employment Services (SCCOE). The Partners meet regularly to discuss AJCC operations, to facilitate continuous improvement, discuss cross training suggestions and opportunities, and take advantage of training opportunities provided by a consultant as well as local partner program services training opportunities. In the program year 24-25, the training focus is on labor market information. A result of this group's past coordination and efforts was designing and implementing the Universal Referral form used by MOU partners in the AJCC to streamline the referral process and clarify an individual's course of action.

As a part of the America's Job Center of California (AJCC) Continuous Improvement Plan, SCCWDB staff will be taking the lead on restarting the Roundtable Partner meetings. Roundtables will be used for networking, community partner presentations, and include discussion topics that partners agreed were important. In the past, meeting agendas have included items such as outreach, how to use the Universal Referral Form, EDD sponsored trainings topics, customer service training and how to use virtual services for intake and enrollment. The former Career Center Operator developed the Integrated Service Delivery Guide, which provides information for service providers on how to help individuals access community agency services, including agency contact information and specifics on how to refer individuals to each agency. The Community Engagement Coordinator is currently reviewing the Integrated Service Delivery Guide to be sure its kept current.

AJCC Continuous Improvement Plan trainings continue to be offered quarterly and focus on continuous improvement plan items such as accessibility, labor market information, and human centered design. The Career Center Operator schedules Continuous Improvement Plan meetings as often as she deems necessary. The AJCC lead staff helped develop the Continuous Improvement Plan targets and the priority of said targets. The One-Stop Operator convenes the group as often as the group wants or she deems necessary to check on the status of progress and to see if they have barriers to working toward the targets. Because they have been intricately involved in the AJCC Certification, partners are well versed in the priorities, targets and individual agency expectations to help meet those targets.

In addition to the above meetings, the Business Engagement Practitioners group meets every other month. Led by SCCWDB staff, it includes economic development and local WIOA MOU partners such as EDD, Department of Rehabilitation, Center for Employment Training, and services providers such as Goodwill Central Coast. The group discusses business engagement efforts in the County, shares best practices, and provides updates on outreach efforts to local businesses. Specifics include identifying potential partnerships and collaborations, determining which industry sectors to serve, and where to target

business outreach. The group has been instrumental in developing local business engagement strategies.

SCCWDB staff also participate in the Central Coast Business Response Team, that is comprised of Regional Workforce Development Boards (Santa Cruz County, Monterey County, San Benito County, San Luis Obispo County). This group prepares for, and responds to, regional rapid response events, including recently collaborating to respond to the Monterey Mushrooms layoff, as the workers lived across counties.

- ***How the Local Board and AJCC partners will work towards co-enrollment and common case management as a service delivery strategy, as outlined in Strategic Co-Enrollment – Unified Plan Partners (WSD19-09).***

SCCWDB understands that coordinated service delivery is important for the success of clients as well as for the efficient use of limited resources. The WFSCC system of partners is continuously striving toward a workforce system that is collaborative, well integrated, and seamless to the customer. The Human Services Department (HSD), in which the SCCWDB operations are housed, offers a wide range of programs and safety net services to help address the basic needs of individuals and families. Co-enrollments between and case management across other HSD programs and WIOA are common. In FY 23-24, for example, 75% of WIOA Adult, 62% of Dislocated Worker, and 81% of Youth are co-enrolled in CalFresh. The figures are even higher for Medi-Cal - 77% of WIOA Adults, 66% of Dislocated Workers and 83% of Youth are co-enrolled in that safety net program. These numbers are a marked increase from the report in the last local Plan Update submitted: 47% of WIOA Adult, 38% of Dislocated Worker, and 48% of Youth are co-enrolled in CalFresh. The figures are even higher for MediCal – 70% of WIOA Adults, 56% of Dislocated Workers and 82% of Youth are co-enrolled in that safety net program. The Human Services Department has a 20-page staff handbook on co-enrollments between WIOA and CalWORKs. The intended purpose of the handbook is to provide instructions and guidance to facilitate successful co-enrollments between HSD employment programs for leveraging resources for better participant outcomes. The handbook includes a description of eligibility requirements for both programs, as well as client flow maps, program requirements and policies, a checklist for determining if co-enrollment is appropriate, as well as specific steps to take. This handbook may be used as a template for other programs should they need to formalize their co-enrollment processes.

As another example of how the SCCWDB facilitates co-enrollment and the development of career pathways, HSD contracts with two community agencies to administer two subsidized employment programs: Community Action Board (CAB) of Santa Cruz County administers SmartHire and Goodwill administers the Expanded Subsidized Employment Program (ESE). SmartHire places clients in jobs with local employers, while ESE places clients with limited job history in positions in their stores to gain job skills. When additional training and skill development is warranted, the employee can move into an On-the-Job training as a WIOA or CalWORKS co-enrollment to improve employee retention. In these ways, SCCWDB is able to ensure wrap-around services and coordinated service delivery for program participants.

- ***How the Local Board and AJCC partners will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through technology and other means.***

The SCCWDB continuously works to make the AJCC delivery system as accessible as possible, including in remote areas. CalJOBS is available online, and customers without computers or smart phones can access computers at public libraries throughout the county, local area schools for youth/students, and local non-profits with computers for their clients. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCCWDB and partners worked throughout 2020 to ensure that customers could continue to access services remotely. Most trainings and orientations were converted to a virtual format, and many remain with a virtual format option, including some of Cabrillo College's courses. Now that the pandemic is behind us, most services are also provided in person.

For business customers, rapid response information and materials were being provided electronically via the internet as well as video meetings. Now those services can be provided in person, at the option of the business customers. Essential businesses are surveyed to identify their workforce needs and remote work opportunities that could be promoted with job seekers. Staff continue to help businesses take advantage of federal assistance programs when available, and a new website was developed to expand virtual services to the public. SCCWDB is implementing continuous improvement to the new website, including using Human Centered Design to make the public facing Workforce Santa Cruz County (WFSCC) website more accessible to the community, and individuals using the site. SCCWDB staff are also developing community education and outreach approaches to point more community members to the public facing website so that they can learn about WFSCC services and resources.

Migrant and seasonal farm worker communities were particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although in-person outreach paused with the shelter-in-place order that began in mid-March of 2020, in-person outreach resumed at the beginning of September. Staff underwent extensive safety trainings before they started going out and continue to provide information about AJCC and EDD services including unemployment insurance, state disability and paid family leave programs, and workers' rights, among others. In addition, with the collaboration with the Agriculture Commissioner, outreach workers distributed masks and hand sanitizers and educated about Center for Disease Control guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As outreach workers continue to do outreach, they continue to carry supplies for farmworkers should they desire masks and hand sanitizers.

- ***How the Local Board and AJCC partners will coordinate workforce and education activities with the provision of appropriate supportive services.***

During the assessment process, case managers identify any supportive services that may be necessary to help participants succeed in training or other workforce activities. In addition to the SCCWDB and WIOA funded supportive services, participants may receive supportive services from the partner agencies and community-based organizations described earlier. Supportive services may include (but are not limited to) transportation

support, childcare, licensing and testing fees, and work-related expenses such as books, uniforms, and/or tools.

Assisting customers with accessing supportive services was even more important during the pandemic, with additional staff and resources directed toward this goal. The AJCC was one of the top three referral agencies to 211, which provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs as well as in times of crisis. County staff have been diverted to serve as disaster workers during the fires in 2020, and during the floods of 2022-23, staffing food banks and emergency shelters, particularly during the 2020 CZU-Lightning Complex Fire which resulted in 70,000 Santa Cruz residents being evacuated from their homes. The system of partners in Santa Cruz County have been working hard to ensure that the basic needs of individuals are being met, including rental assistance, food assistance, accessing federal pandemic relief, and other resources.

- ***How the Local Board and AJCC partners will comply with WIOA Section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical accessibility of facilities, programs and services, assistive technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, as outlined in Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Procedures (WSD17-01).***

Annually, the SCCWDB undertakes a review and reports to the State EEO office about the physical and programmatic accessibility at the AJCC and its Capitola affiliate site and the WIOA youth facility. This thorough assessment process is undertaken in coordination with the Human Service Department's EEO/ADA Coordinator. Any requirements not fully met are given a time-specific corrective action plan.

Requirements of the annual assessment include having staff training in serving individuals with disabilities, ensuring that all staff are aware of the policies and practices to offer reasonable accommodations to ensure accessibility to programs and services, providing an accessible physical environment, appropriate signage, and numerous other accessibility requirements.

Partners to the AJCC through the MOU, such as the Department of Rehabilitation, also provide staff development for system partners and services that enable greater accessibility, including assistive technology (assessment and equipment), disability awareness training for employers and assistance to those with a documented disability.

SCCWDB direct service providers, Goodwill Central Coast (for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker) and the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (for the Suenos WIOA Youth program) receive EEO staff training on an annual basis through SCCWDB in collaboration with the HSD staff development division.

State Strategic Partner Coordination

This section of the Local Plan should address the ongoing establishment of concrete goals through coordination efforts with established partnerships. The CWDB recognizes the need for robust stakeholder and community partnerships. Considerable effort should be made to develop meaningful relationships across local systems, including how AJCC partners coordinate to meet workforce needs, align with state zero emissions goals, and support a climate-neutral economy. Coordination with local agencies such as the Employment Training Panel, California Community Colleges Chancellors Office, and the Department of Industrial Relations-Division of Apprenticeship Standards are examples of the collaboratives that can help serve disadvantaged communities in an economy aiming for environmental sustainability.

The Local Plan should address the following:

- ***How the Local Board will coordinate with County Health and Human Services Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who access CalFresh Employment and Training services.***

The County of Santa Cruz's Human Services Department (HSD) administers the CalFresh and WIOA programs and in fiscal year 2017-18 moved the WIOA program under the same division as CalFresh, Employment and Benefits Services Division. Additionally, these programs share the same Division Director. This organizational structure provides opportunities for streamlined collaboration and a means to better connect CalFresh clients with workforce services. As mentioned previously, there is a high degree of co-enrollment between these programs - 75% of WIOA Adult, 62% of Dislocated Worker, and 81% of Youth are co-enrolled in CalFresh.

The CalFresh program along with the Santa Cruz Homeless Services Center (HSC) and the Downtown Streets Team continue to be a strong collaboration to provide CalFresh Employment and Training services, and Second Harvest Food Bank to conduct outreach. The HSC has one full-time case manager that provides one-on-one services and operates a small job search center that provides services similar to that of the AJCC. Second Harvest Food Bank conducts outreach throughout the County, connecting with the migrant farmworker population in the agricultural areas and the large immigrant community in south County.

Partners who serve CalFRESH recipients work closely together and meet on a regular basis through the Career Center Operator meetings and SCCWDB meetings. Additionally, there is an established "warm hand-off" referral process through the local Universal Referral form used by partner staff, and shared labor market information tools - the SantaCruz.careerconcourse.com and the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, which were developed by the SCCWDB. Collaboration and communication between the CalFresh and WIOA programs have become more efficient with HSD's decision to move WIOA under the Employment and Benefit Services Division alongside CalFresh.

- ***How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Child Support Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who are non-custodial parents.***

The regional DCSS office oversees services in Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties with the Santa Cruz County office located in the City of Watsonville. Santa Cruz County DCSS

services include establishing court orders for paternity, child support and medical coverage; locating non-custodial parents and their assets to enforce court orders; maintaining accounts of payments paid and past due; modifying court orders when appropriate; enforcing court orders for child, family, and medical support; and spousal support in conjunction with child support. As of the end of December 2024, the caseload was over 4,500 individuals.

To serve both non-custodial and custodial parents, DCSS works with many organizations and public agencies in the community. DCSS works closely with the county jail to provide information on child support obligations; PAPÁS, a community-based organization that provides supportive services to fathers and encourages their involvement with their children and communities; and the County courts.

DCSS is included in invitations to the Career Center Operator meetings and partner meetings and has found that partner meetings are a good means to stay connected to the workforce system. Line staff have attended partner meetings so that they could become more familiar with the services that are available. DCSS has been added to the Integrated Service Delivery Guide, and referral information has been shared with their staff.

DCSS is invited to the community engagement and strategic planning sessions for the development of the WIOA Local Plan as well as for the SCCWDB's Strategic Plan.

- ***How the Local Board will coordinate with local Partnership Agreement partners, established in alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint, and other local, regional, and statewide partners who serve individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.***

Santa Cruz County is part of the San Jose District for Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), which also includes parts of Santa Clara County and Monterey County. The regional center serving Santa Cruz County is the San Andreas Regional Center. Much of the current partnership stems from an agreement outlined by the DOR and the State Board, which highlights four main policy priorities for the DOR. The four priorities are: services to youth, employer engagement, capacity building, and Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). SCCWDB works with the DOR to support all four of these priorities. Community Life, as an example, is a local provider which serves small numbers. Community Life operates a day program for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and works closely with San Andreas Regional Center.

Through regular communication and coordination, SCCWDB and other local partners can continue to support the CIE Local Partnership Agreement. DOR continues to be a core partner of the SCCWDB, with senior management sitting on the SCCWDB and line staff attending Career Center Operator meetings. DOR provides trainings to partners through online video opportunities. DOR and SCCWDB have partnered on promoting DOR's annual employer recognition event as part of Disability Awareness Month, and DOR has also arranged for presentations at SCCWDB meetings. Recently, SCCWDB staff provided

a Workforce Development Services presentation to DOR staff so that they would be apprised of the most current services.

A WDB staff member attends the Santa Cruz County Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) meetings. The LPA was developed to create a more efficient and effective system wherein the three core and multiple community partners work collaboratively to increase competitive and integrated employment for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (ID/DD) in transition through high school and into adulthood. The LPA works on creating smooth pathways for individuals to access local community resources and opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE) and to be independent contributing members to their community.

- ***How the Local Board will coordinate with community-based organizations and other local partners who serve individuals who are English language learners, foreign-born, and/or refugees.***

Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education (WASCAE) continues to be a member of the SCCWDB providing adult education services throughout Santa Cruz County. WASCAE operates as part of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. WASCAE provides a wide array of classes with course offerings including citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL), and career Technical Education. The majority of locations are in south county, which has the highest need, at various Watsonville locations including the Green Valley Center at 294 Green Valley Road, and the Watsonville Downtown Center at 320 Rodriguez Street. Other county locations include the Santa Cruz Center at 319 La Fonda, Santa Cruz High School, Live Oak Family Center, and Pacific Elementary School in Davenport.

WASCAE offers career pathways aligned with SCCWDB priority sectors, in healthcare, office skills, and information technology. The healthcare pathway is the most robust with programs including Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Medical Assistant, Administrative Medical Assistant, EKG, Dental Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, Medical Terminology, and Personal Care Assistant. WASCAE also has a healthcare bridge program that connects students to Cabrillo, the local community college, which has a variety of health/medical programs. To ensure a smooth transition for students who complete their secondary or career technical education, WASCAE counselors and Transition Specialist practice a warm handoff to other agencies such as the Center for Employment Training (CET), and other WIOA partners.

WASCAE staff work with the SCCWDB to ensure efforts are coordinated. The Assistant Director is a current SCCWDB Board Member. WASCAE staff leadership attend regularly scheduled One-Stop Operator meetings in order to collaborate and fulfill WIOA mandates, to ensure SCCWDB goals and objectives are being met, and to improve coordination with other network partners for the benefit of our shared clients. WASCAE counselors, Transition Specialist, and front office staff also communicate with WIOA network partners regularly regarding referrals and co-enrollments.

In 2021-22 and 2022-23, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors sponsored pre-apprenticeship training using American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds to provide

pre-apprenticeship training through the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE) and the Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult School (WASCAE).

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) funded an apprenticeship program through the Tri-County Apprenticeship Preparation Program with grant funds providing five cohorts with 20 individuals each. The program served Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties. Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the WDB staff expanded the program for Santa Cruz County residents partnering with two local agencies to offer apprenticeship preparation services: Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE) and the Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult School (WASCAE).

On May 16, 2022, WASCAE started its first round of apprenticeship preparation training with a cohort of 15. The training ended in July with seven students successfully completing the program. A second cohort of pre-apprenticeship trainees included 14 students all of whom graduated in May 2023.

In addition to WASCAE services, EDD contracts with the Center for Employment Training (CET) to provide Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker services. CET provides the following set of services at the co-located comprehensive AJCC, as well as at their own office. The co-location at the AJCC ensures the integration of services with the greater workforce system.

- Information and referral
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) application/access point
- WIOA/ migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) Program eligibility determination
- WIOA basic and individualized career services
- Vocational training programs for green building construction skills, medical assistants, medical clerks, maintenance technicians, and welding fabrication.
- In-house supportive services; Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) courses; financial aid/ Pell Grants; instructional programs for High School Equivalency (GED)
- Human Development Sessions: financial literacy; life skills workshops
- Job Placement assistance services for participants
- Follow-up assistance – post training

• ***How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Veteran Affairs, community-based organizations, and other local partners who serve veterans.***

Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with its America's Job Center (AJCC) partners, the local workforce development system works in coordination with all required WIOA partners and other local key partners, the local Board coordinates with its WIOA Title III partners, including Veterans Services.

The MOU partners, as described in the MOU, serve those with barriers to employment through a number of strategies and services, including EDD Veteran's Affairs, as well as the entire partner list providing services in the AJCC. Please see the list for the question regarding the MOU (*How Local Boards and AJCC partners will coordinate the services and resources identified in their MOU, as outlined in WIOA Memorandums of Understanding (WSD18-12).*

The Santa Cruz County Veterans Services Office is part of the Santa Cruz County Human Services Department, the County social services department, which also houses the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board.

WFSCC uses a Universal Referral form and EDD Veteran's Services is one of the partners to which WFSCC can refer (and vice versa).

The SCCWDB is housed within the County social services agency, the Santa Cruz County Human Services Department, as is County of Santa Cruz Veteran's services, working closely to provide veterans with workforce development services. Current partnership efforts to better serve veterans include:

- Updating the County of Santa Cruz Veteran's Services webpage to better describe and facilitate veterans accessing WIOA services.
- Providing a list of non-WIOA services available to veterans on the WFSCC/WIOA website.

In keeping with the WIOA regulations, veterans, and their eligible spouses, receive priority of services. They also have a 24 hour hold on job listings in CalJOBS for veterans before they are released to other WIOA customers.

As part of the development of the Workforce Santa Cruz County Strategic Plan 2025-2030, there will be a community engagement focus group for veterans to provide their insights, experiences and suggestions for how we can better support workforce development in our County.

- ***How the Local Board will collaborate with the Strategic Planning partners to address environmental sustainability.***

The Board will continue to collaborate and to build new alliances with strategic planning partners to address environmental sustainability. A recent example of this: The Workforce Development Board (WDB) funded an apprenticeship program through the Tri-County Apprenticeship Preparation Program with grant funds providing five cohorts with 20 individuals each. The program served Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties. Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the WDB staff expanded the program for Santa Cruz County residents partnering with two local agencies to offer apprenticeship preparation services: Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE) and the Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult School (WASCAE).

The pre-apprenticeship training, evolving from a Proposition 39 Clean Energy pre-apprenticeship program, train in basic construction skills and creation of structured pathways to apprenticeship programs in the building trades. Training includes certification in union recognized MC3 curriculum, OSHA 10 training, and AHA CPR/First Aid.

The SCCOE pre-apprenticeship training cohort started January 11, 2023, with 10 enrollees consisting of justice-involved individuals in the Rountree Medium Facility. Eight (8) total

graduated. The second SCCOE pre-apprenticeship cohort started at Rountree on August 28, and concluded on November 1, 2023. Four (4) total graduated.

On May 16, 2022, WASCAE started its first round of apprenticeship preparation training with a cohort of 15. The training ended in July with seven students successfully completing the program. A second cohort of pre-apprenticeship trainees included 14 students all of whom graduated in May 2023.

A recent example of building a new alliance to address environmental sustainability: The Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board is partnering and playing an advisory role on an Uplift Central Coast grant application with the City of Santa Cruz.

Green jobs are indicated in CalJOBS and the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board will be adding this information to its local in demand Eligible Training Provider List for staff use when making training placements with WIOA customers.

WIOA Title I Coordination

This section of the Local Plan should describe strategies for staff preparation, training, and ongoing professional development to respond to participant needs effectively. It should also address the services, activities, and administrative requirements established for Local Boards under WIOA Title I.

The Local Plan should address the following:

- ***Training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to gain and expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning.***

The SCCWDB staff maintain a Staff and Partner Training Plan which aligns to the AJCC Continuous Improvement Plan goals. The following is a list of trainings (including those that help staff gain skills in digital fluency and distance learning) that have been planned or have taken place in the last year:

- WIOA Program Co-enrollments
- Disability Awareness & Etiquette
- LMID Training
- Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity
- EDD Programs Training
- Enhancing Skills and Support for Serving Veterans 2024
- SER National (farm worker program)
- Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education (WASCAE) Programs
- SCCWDB secured a James Irvine Foundation Workforce Capacity Fund grant to assist the SCCWDB with further developing human centered design capability, as well as equity approaches. This grant will start being implemented in 2025.

Through Regional Coordination between Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties, Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board staff, as well as WIOA service providers, have access to the WSB Statewide Training Unit's CalJOBS Training Webinar Series with trainings that include offerings such as CalJOBS 101: CalJOBS Customization

and Tips and Tricks, Go Green! CalJOBS Document Management, and WIOA Performance 101: Introduction to WIOA Performance.

- ***Training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to ensure cultural competencies and an understanding of the experiences of trauma exposed populations.***

SCCWDB is committed to continuous improvement of programs and services through providing staff and partners regular opportunities for professional development and growth. The COVID-19 pandemic certainly impacted the ability to provide staff training in 2020 as resources and staff time were already stretched thin in responding to the twin crises of the pandemic and economic fallout, in addition to the CZU Lightning Complex wildfire in August 2020. Moving forward in the post-pandemic SCCWDB staff maintain a Staff and Partner Training Plan which aligns to AJCC Continuous Improvement Plan goals. The Workforce Santa Cruz County Training Plan for PY 24/25 (including those that help staff gain skills in cultural competency) in the last year include:

- WIOA Program Co-enrollments
- Disability Awareness & Etiquette
- LMID Training
- Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity
- EDD Programs Training
- Enhancing Skills and Support for Serving Veterans 2024
- SER National (farm worker program)
- Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education (WASCAE) Programs
- SCCWDB secured a James Irvine Foundation Workforce Capacity Fund grant to assist the SCCWDB with further developing human centered design capability, as well as equity approaches. This grant will start being implemented in 2025.

Trainings that are scheduled in PY 24/25 include:

- WIOA Section 188: Civil Rights, Nondiscrimination
- Career Coaching Competencies in WIOA (provided by Goodwill Central Coast)

Through Regional Coordination between Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties, Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board staff, as well as WIOA service providers, have access to the WSB Statewide Training Unit's CalJOBS Training Webinar Series with trainings that include offerings such as CalJOBS 101: CalJOBS Customization and Tips and Tricks, Go Green! CalJOBS Document Management, and WIOA Performance 101: Introduction to WIOA Performance.

- ***How the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities in the Local Area with statewide rapid response activities, as outlined in Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities (WSD16-04).***

The WFSCC coordinates with the Central Coast Business Engagement Roundtable (CCBER) that meets quarterly to discuss the broad region needs for Rapid Response and

Layoff Aversion Activities. The CCBER includes Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. The Business Engagement Roundtable was established to support businesses in the region with their layoff and/or hiring needs along with incumbent worker training opportunities. At the quarterly meetings, the team hears from State EDD/TAA, California Workforce Development Board, California Labor Federation, DOL and the Employment Training Panel for services and grant opportunities.

The WFSCC system also continues to have a strong collaboration with all other employment and training agencies to help affected individuals desiring new employment to find it as soon as possible. The SCCWDB collaborates with its partners to provide Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion services, using several strategies. SCCWDB contracts with the Central Coast Small Business Development Center to administer the business closure “Early Alert” information system and the Retain Your Employees program. These programs operate in coordination with the SCCWDB’s Business Services Team (contracted to Goodwill Central Coast) to identify business at risk of closure or relocation or staff reduction and to provide counseling, resource referral and support to avert potential layoffs.

The SCCWDB coordinates with EDD to provide businesses and employees with Rapid Response and Dislocated Worker services for both WARN and smaller sized layoffs. Based on the employees impacted, the SCCWDB coordinates Rapid Response activities with organized labor and Trade Adjustment Act services, as appropriate.

Due to the 2020 pandemic, Rapid Response materials are now available online in both English and Spanish to affected individuals. Pre-pandemic, and post-pandemic for those willing to have the Rapid Response Team in person, the team goes to affected job sites to offer Unemployment Insurance benefits information; resume, interview, and job search assistance; outplacement and transition services; vocational and skill assessments; and labor market information.

The Business Services Committee of SCCWDB annually assesses business services outcomes to recommend any strategic changes to make services more effective. The SCCWDB applies for additional Rapid Response and/or Governor's discretionary funds when needed to meet identified business service needs. The SCCWDB also supports its regional partners when they apply for additional funding. Businesses are able to access information about Rapid Response and other services in the document, “Guide to Workforce Service for Employers in Santa Cruz County.” (<https://tinyurl.com/y6po7ztn>)

- **A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the Local Area.**

Note – This includes how the Local Board will ensure that priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other income low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as outlined in WIOA Adult Program Priority of Service (WSD24-06). Additional priority groups may need to be considered to serve the local area better. The Economic and Workforce Analysis section of the State Plan

identifies workforce targets such as low-wage or high-unemployment industries that could be relevant to the local area's needs.

As alluded to in the description of partner roles and MOU services, the full menu of workforce development services and resources is available to job seekers and businesses in Santa Cruz County. SCCWDB contracts with Goodwill Central Coast (GCC) to provide WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker services in Santa Cruz County. Services are provided in two locations which includes both the full service One-Stop AJCC career center in Watsonville as well as one affiliate career center in Capitola. During the COVID-19 pandemic, job seekers were able to access one-on-one services virtually through an online platform. Beginning in March 2022, services began to be held in person by appointment and services are now provided through walk-in as well.

WIOA funding is targeted to support and prepare job seekers with barriers to employment, including the priority of service categories of low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and recipients of public assistance. The AJCC service provider is required through contract and local WDB approved policy to implement the priority of services requirements (16-01 Priority of Service Policy) and collaborates closely with partners to ensure outreach to target populations and to support their access to services. The provider is very accommodating to individual needs and barriers and can provide in person intake and assessment, or remote intake and assessment, depending on the preference and needs of the individual.

The following is an overview of the career services provided through the AJCC:

- Orientation – Customers are provided with an overview of services and information on how to access AJCC and other community resources through English and Spanish language online videos.
- Assessment – Assessments help define customers' skills, interests, aptitudes, experience, and abilities to help in setting career goals. Assessments also assist in identifying barriers to employment that need to be addressed to aid the customer along the path to success.
- Eligibility Determination – Assists in determining an individual's eligibility and suitability for workforce programs and supportive services.
- Information and Referrals – Customers are provided with information on services in the greater workforce system, including supportive services and employment opportunities. Information on labor market conditions and training opportunities (including the ETPL) is also available.
- Individual Case Management – Staff work with individual participants to develop Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) that address their employment goals, any barriers to their success, supportive services needed, and the sequence of services. Individual case management also assists participants with identifying potential career paths within their chosen industry.
- Individual Training Accounts – WIOA funds of up to \$10,000 per participant are available to assist with the costs of in-demand occupational skills training. Training may include vocational training; English as a Second language courses; adult education and literacy activities; skills upgrades and retraining; On-the-Job training; customized training for employers.

- Supportive Services – As described previously, supportive services help participants to successfully participate in and complete workforce and training services. Supportive services are available through WIOA as well as many partner organizations, and may include transportation support, childcare, licensing and testing fees, and work-related expenses.
- Job Search Support – These services include (but are not limited to) workshops in resumes, interviews, job applications, and others; computer, telephone, and printer access; individualized counseling; employment leads onsite hiring events and career fairs.
- Follow Up Services – Staff continue to communicate regularly with enrolled participants for up to 12 months, to assist with any barriers that may have arisen with new employment.
- Financial Literacy Training – Offered through Goodwill Central Coast.

Some of the strengths of the Santa Cruz County workforce development system include a high Individual Training Account (ITA) cap which would allow a customer to complete an associate degree in an in-demand occupation; a large and generally educated labor pool; resources to offset the costs of hiring new employees; and strong local partnerships. Opportunities for growth within the system include better matching of job seekers with local employment openings and strengthening employer connections with community college programs to develop new trainings based on industry needs.

- ***A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the Local Area, as outlined in WIOA Youth Program Requirements (WSD17-07). Note – This includes any strategies for increasing the digital literacy and fluency of youth participants, including those with disabilities.***

The SCCWDB contracts with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (COE)'s Sueños program to provide education and employment and training services to WIOA eligible youth between the ages of 16-24 that are low-income and have other barriers to successfully attaining a high school diploma or its equivalency, entering a post-secondary education program, or being gainfully employed. The Sueños offers a physical space (during non-pandemic times) including an equipped resource room, job search workshops, job club, labor market information, staff assisted services, training, and supportive services.

The design of services allows the system to address the needs of Out-of-School (OSY) youth, as well as meet the WIOA requirement to spend 75% of the youth allocation on OSY. The 14 WIOA youth program elements are provided and include but not limited to: study skills trainings, alternative secondary school services, evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies, paid and un-paid work experience, internships and job shadowing, workforce preparation activities, leadership development opportunities, supportive services, adult mentoring, financial literacy skills training, services that provide labor market information, follow-up services, and postsecondary preparation and transition activities.

Approximately twenty percent of the total budget funds are dedicated to work experience, wages, and incentives for youth, with the balance of the budget being used to support a variety of occupational skills training. COE provides trainings in customer service and hospitality, agriculture (including farm/field technologies) and entrepreneurship. Youth in need of digital literacy skills are provided training in that area as well, and youth who do not have access to technology at home can borrow a laptop.

SCCWDB has availed itself to the Out of School (OSY) waiver, reducing the requirement to serve 75% OSY, to 50%. With an approved waiver, SCCWDB now serves more In School Youth (ISY) with barriers, including youth experiencing homelessness, justice involved, disabled and foster youth.

COE encourages young people to explore potential career pathways, and tailors its approach to the individual youth. In turn, participants have been more successful in their Work Experience placements, employment, and transition to post-secondary education.

In working with individuals with disabilities, COE focuses on proven approaches such as work based learning, employer engagement and exploration of career pathways. With work-based learning, participants are given opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills through the exploration of jobs, work readiness activities, internships, and paid work experience. The COE has seen success with this model as it has assisted individuals with disabilities prepare for employment and transition to post-secondary education. COE works with partner agencies, such as Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education to tap into their expertise regarding best practices with individuals with disabilities as well as referring individuals to other resources that may be helpful. Youth with disabilities also benefit from the arrangement between SCCWDB and DOR: The plan is to leverage the different resources available for customers. Whether an individual comes through WIOA Adult/DW/Youth or the DOR door, the customer will receive information about what other resources are available that can also support success. With co-enrollment, customers receive additional services for which they may be eligible.

The strengths of Santa Cruz County's youth workforce services include a robust system of education and training offerings; colocation of other youth vocational training programs within Sequoia High School; established relationships with businesses in hospitality, agriculture, and technology; and a strong relationship with the CalWORKs program for co-enrollments and complimentary services. Challenges that continue to be addressed are outreach to out of school youth and continued development of new employer and sponsorship relationships. SCCWDB recently approved a Youth Individual Training Account (ITA) policy which allows youth access to ITAs (separate from the WIOA Adult ITA waitlist). Youth will not have to wait to enroll in an approved vocational training of their choice. Additionally, no less than five (maybe more given the cost of training) youth can receive a training scholarship (there is a \$50,000 allocation for year one),

- ***The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Chief Elected Official (CEO) or the Governor and the competitive process that will be used to award the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.***

The Human Services Department (HSD) as the grant recipient and as the administrative fiscal agent for the Santa Cruz County Local Workforce Development Area, through the Santa Cruz County Auditor's office, is responsible for disbursing grant funds. The SCCWDB follows the County's Procurement Policy and federal and state guidelines for awarding contracts and grant funds. The SCCWDB uses an open and competitive process to secure providers of services and activities under Title I of WIOA. Potential bidders are notified through a formal notification process which may include the publication of the notice to potential bidders in local newspapers as well as mailings to a bidders list of former, current, and other potential service providers. The process includes a Request for Qualifications step to establish provider eligibility, Requests for Proposals or Bid issuance, a formal review process of responses, and final recommendation of providers to appropriate WDB Committee, Executive Committee and, finally, to the SCCWDB for all providers and contracts for Youth and Adult/Dislocated Worker services, and for final contract approval by the County Board of Supervisors. The SCCWDB's Procurement Policy has appeals process that meets Federal, State and County guidelines.

- ***A description of how the Local Board fulfills the duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider as outlined in Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers (WSD22-13). This should include the name(s) and role(s) of all entities with whom the Local Board contracts.***

SCCWDB competitively selects contractors to fulfill the duties of the AJCC Career Center Operator and Career Services Providers. Current contractors are as follows:

- WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Services: Goodwill Central Coast
- WIOA Youth Services: Sueños (Santa Cruz County Office of Education)
- Lay-off Aversion: Cabrillo College Small Business Development Center
- Career Center Operator: Racy Ming and Associates

3. *Appendices:*

- Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary*
- Public comments received that disagree with the Local Plan*
- Signature Page*

**Santa Cruz County
Workforce Development Board
2025-2028 Local Plan**

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

The following public forums were held for the Local Plan:

- Job Seekers (North and South County) - January 29th, 2025 @ Career Center Classroom, 500 Westridge Dr.
- CBO's - January 30th, 2025 @ Career Center Classroom, 500 Westridge Dr.
- Education and Training - January 30th, 2025 @ Career Center Classroom, 500 Westridge Dr.
- Employers (Virtual via TEAMS) - February 3rd, 2025

**Public Comments That Disagree with the
Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board's
2025-2028 Local Plan**

- There were no public comments that disagreed with the Plan.

Signature Page

Instructions – The local CEO and Local Board chair must sign and date this form.

By signing below, the local CEO and Local Board chair request approval of Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board's 2025-2028 Local Plan.

Local Workforce Development
Board Chair



Signature

Rob Morse

Name

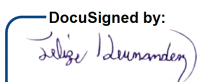
Santa Cruz County Workforce
Development Board Chair

Title

3/19/25

Date

Local Chief Elected Official



Signature

Felipe Hernandez

Name

Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors, Chair

Title

5/21/2025

Date

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Four-Year Regional Plan for
North Central Coast Regional Planning Unit

Local Workforce Development Area(s)

Regional Lead Contact for RPU: Christopher Donnelly, Monterey County

Date of Submission: April 11, 2025

Local Area	Contact Name	Phone Number	Email
Monterey County	Chris Donnelly	831-759-6644	DonnellyC@countyofmonterey.gov
Santa Cruz County	Andy Stone	831-763-8824	Andy.Stone@santacruzcountyca.gov
San Benito County	Enrique Arreola	831-637-5627	EArreola@sanbenitocountyca.gov

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Executive Summary

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local workforce development boards and chief elected officials to engage in an integrated regional and local workforce planning process to prepare, submit, and obtain approval of a single collaborative regional plan that incorporates local plans for each of the local areas within the given workforce planning region. This plan serves as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate service delivery strategies to support the region's vision and its strategic and operational goals.

This four-year Regional Plan comes at a crucial time for the North Central Coast region and its local components. The COVID-19 pandemic had unprecedented impacts on the regional workforce and economy, and strategic recovery efforts have helped ensure that the region rebuilds towards a more prosperous and equitable future. This Regional Plan aims to align regional planning unit (RPU) members along specific approaches to achieving the vision and objectives provided in the State Plan. Fulfilling this vision requires partners to collaborate regularly across agencies, programs, and funding streams to align strategic efforts, investments, and service delivery activities to meet shared outcomes within common in-demand industry sectors.

The North Central Coast RPU focused on crafting a Regional Plan that would meet the State's formal guidance while also considering the temporary and permanent effects that the four-year pandemic had on the region. The RPU members are confident that the themes and objectives outlined in this plan will assist in the continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires, and subsequent flooding, while fostering relationships with partners, and working towards more equitable opportunities for workers in the region.

The North Central Coast RPU builds upon the following strategic goals provided by the State:

1. Fostering demand-driven skills attainment by:
 - a. Leveraging labor market data to uncover strategic opportunities and gaps in training and education.
2. Enabling upward mobility for all Californians by:
 - a. Investing in specific career pathways in key industries, collaborating with regional partners and stakeholders, and ensuring access through America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs).
3. Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services by:
 - a. Collaborating closely with community colleges and adult education providers, community-based organizations, non-profits, industry and chambers representatives, and other local organizations.

A principal component of this Regional Plan involves identifying target and growth opportunity industries and occupational pathways within those industries. The North Central Coast RPU's Regional Plan relies upon the following to drive findings and strategies:

- a. The most-up-to-date labor market information available to identify the current state of the labor market and local economy;
- b. Engagement with regional and industry leaders to get details beyond labor market data; and
- c. Consideration of macroeconomic influences and equity ramifications.

The WIOA Regional Plan for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties represents a comprehensive approach to workforce development that addresses the unique needs and opportunities of each county. By enhancing workforce skills, supporting youth employment, expanding access to employment, and aligning workforce development with economic growth, we strive to create a thriving labor market that benefits all residents.

Analytical Overview of the North Central Coast Region

The WIOA is landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve the public workforce system, helping Americans—including youth and individuals with significant barriers to employment—secure high-quality jobs and careers. This Regional Plan, covering Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties, aims to align workforce development strategies with economic development goals to enhance employment opportunities for residents.

This section provides an analysis of the economic conditions, workforce trends, and key challenges in the region. Data for this analysis is compiled from multiple sources, including the State of California's Employment Development Department (EDD) labor market information (LMI), JOBS EQ, and other relevant economic reports.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has largely subsided, its economic impacts persist in certain areas of the region. To accurately assess these conditions, the Santa Cruz Workforce Development Board's Business Services team developed an Industry Spotlight and Economic Overview for all three counties within the North Central Coast Regional Planning Unit (RPU). This analysis provides valuable insights into regional labor market trends and informs strategic planning efforts.

WIOA Regional Plan Goals

The WIOA Regional Plan for the North Central Coast region focuses on the following primary objectives:

- **Enhancing Workforce Skills** – Developing training programs that address current and future skill needs of local employers.
 - **Supporting Youth Employment** – Creating initiatives that equip young people with skills, experiences, and support to thrive in the labor market.
 - **Expanding Access to Employment** – Improving employment opportunities for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.
 - **Fostering Economic Growth** – Aligning workforce development efforts with economic development strategies to support regional economic expansion.
-

Workforce and Economic Analysis of the Region

This section presents labor market data for the North Central Coast RPU, providing insights that guide strategic planning and decision-making.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on economies, populations, and industries across the RPU, State, nation, and world. While employment levels have rebounded, significant challenges remain, particularly for historically disadvantaged communities facing low wages and limited economic mobility.

The three most pressing workforce challenges in the North Central Coast Region are:

1. Labor Supply Issues – A shortage of workers willing and available to meet employer demand.
2. Population Retention – The difficulty of keeping a sufficient working-age population due to housing affordability, cost of living, and other economic factors.
3. Workforce Adaptability – The need for workers to upskill and transition into new industries as job demands and skill requirements evolve.

County-Specific Economic Profiles

Monterey County

- Key Industries: Manufacturing and agriculture
- Economic Trends: Growth in agriculture and manufacturing, though challenges persist due to an aging workforce and the need for technological advancements.

Santa Cruz County

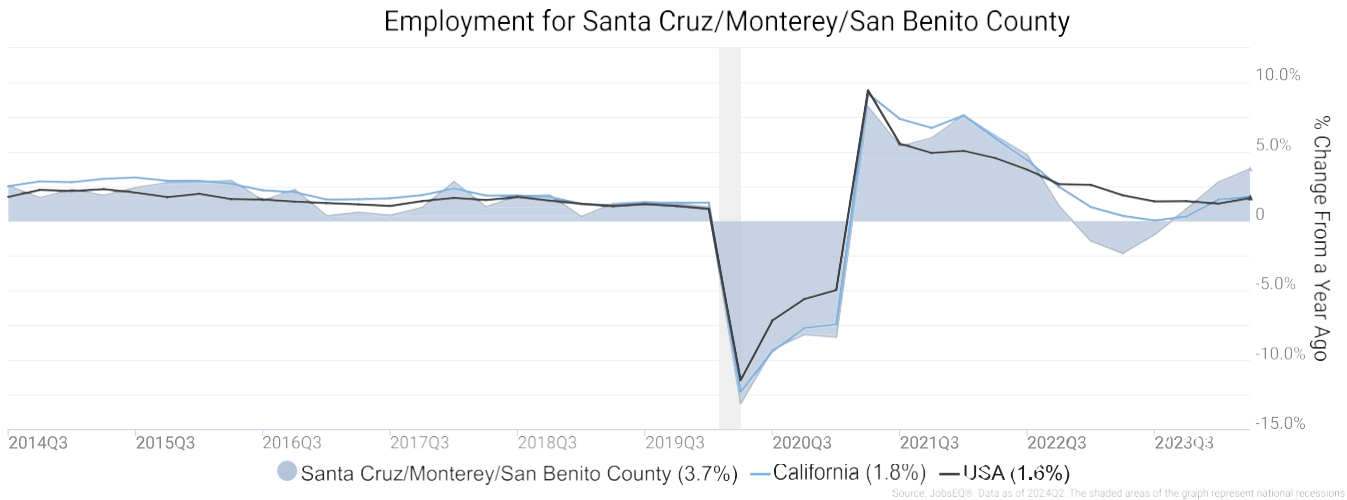
- Key Industries: Healthcare, education, and technology
- Economic Trends: A diverse and dynamic workforce, supported by several educational institutions that provide a steady pipeline of skilled workers.

San Benito County

- Key Industries: Tourism and service industries
- Economic Trends: While tourism and hospitality provide employment, there is a growing need to diversify the local economy and create more stable, year-round job opportunities.

Current Employment Trends

As of 2024Q2, total employment for the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region was 342,404 (based on a four-quarter moving average). Over the year ending 2024Q2, employment increased 3.7% in the region.

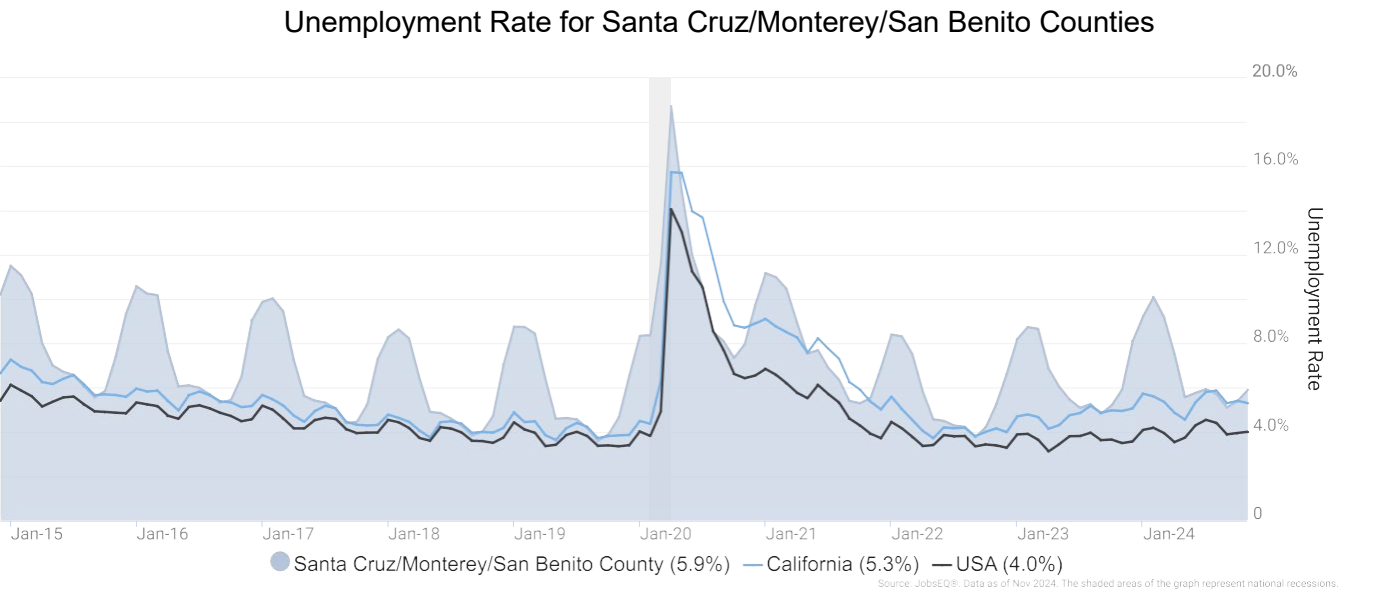


Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2024Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q2.

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data is updated through 2024Q1.

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate for the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region was 5.9% as of November 2024. The regional unemployment rate was higher than the national rate of 4.0%. One year earlier, in November 2023, the unemployment rate in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region was 5.9%.

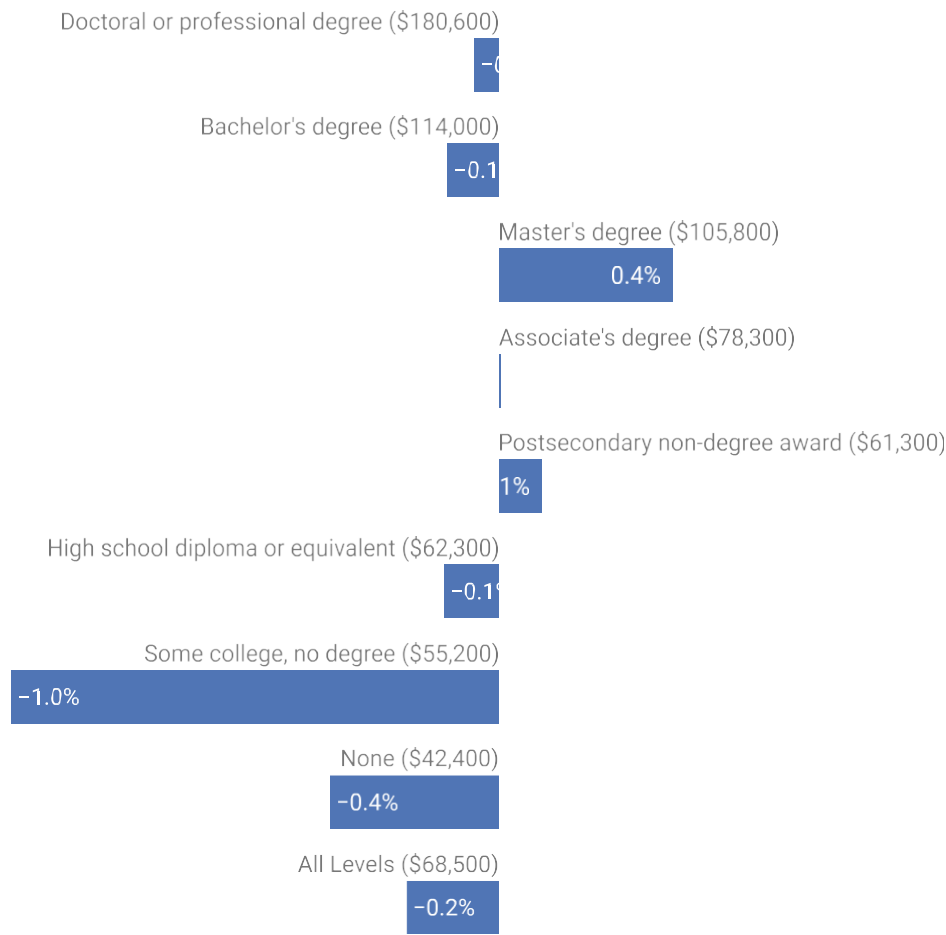


The data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, through November 2024.

Current Education and Skill Levels

Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region is projected to contract 0.2% over the next ten years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to contract 0.1% per year, those requiring a bachelor’s degree are forecast to contract 0.1% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to remain at 0.0% per year.

Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Education Levels



Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2024Q2

Employment by occupation data are estimates as of 2024Q2. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Occupation Snapshot

The largest major occupation group in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region is Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations, employing 44,297 workers. The next-largest occupation groups in the region are Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (31,613 workers) and Office and Administrative Support Occupations (30,859). High location quotients (LQs) indicate occupation groups in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The major groups with the largest LQs in the region are Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations (LQ = 22.21), Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations (1.19), and Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations (1.18).

Occupation groups in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region with the highest average wages per worker are Legal Occupations (\$140,700), Management Occupations (\$136,900), and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (\$134,600). The unemployment rate in the region varied among the major groups from 1.7% among Legal Occupations to 10.3% among Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations.

Over the next 2 years, the fastest growing occupation group in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region is expected to be Healthcare Support Occupations with a +1.2% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Healthcare Support Occupations (+402 jobs) and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (+70). Over the same period, the highest separation demand (occupation demand due to retirements and workers moving from one occupation to another) is expected in Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations (13,290 jobs) and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (11,768).

Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County, 2024Q2¹

SOC	Occupation	Current			5-Year History					2-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Mean Ann Wages²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads³	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	44,297	\$40,900	22.21	3,666	8.2%	17	-453	-0.2%	12,990	5,442	7,848	-300	-0.3%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	31,613	\$43,200	1.12	3,890	10.3%	1,010	-62	0.0%	11,666	5,074	6,694	-102	-0.2%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	30,859	\$55,000	0.77	1,973	5.4%	1,022	-1,824	-1.1%	6,013	2,875	3,704	-566	-0.9%
11-0000	Management	26,699	\$136,900	1.01	819	2.9%	1,592	1,487	1.2%	4,509	1,908	2,560	41	0.1%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	26,573	\$49,100	0.89	3,163	9.9%	605	524	0.4%	6,563	2,538	4,029	-3	0.0%
41-0000	Sales and Related	24,032	\$55,800	0.80	2,175	7.8%	1,614	-1,780	-1.4%	5,747	2,679	3,500	-433	-0.9%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library	19,996	\$82,800	1.08	994	4.9%	985	313	0.3%	3,209	1,659	1,888	-339	-0.9%
31-0000	Healthcare Support	16,758	\$42,100	1.06	1,226	6.2%	1,155	1,633	2.1%	5,091	2,185	2,504	402	1.2%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	16,040	\$134,600	0.79	461	2.6%	4,235	1,261	1.7%	1,828	913	844	70	0.2%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	15,548	\$93,600	0.71	858	4.8%	751	851	1.1%	2,469	867	1,613	-11	0.0%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	13,326	\$46,600	1.19	1,497	9.1%	399	355	0.5%	3,420	1,517	1,984	-82	-0.3%
51-0000	Production	12,294	\$51,300	0.66	1,109	7.3%	176	-648	-1.0%	2,622	1,031	1,696	-104	-0.4%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	12,263	\$72,100	0.80	1,513	9.2%	152	426	0.7%	1,981	733	1,256	-8	0.0%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	10,181	\$66,400	0.76	552	4.7%	452	223	0.4%	1,762	721	1,039	2	0.0%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	8,465	\$45,200	0.96	781	8.0%	250	157	0.4%	3,022	1,144	1,873	4	0.0%
33-0000	Protective Service	7,049	\$79,500	0.96	450	5.7%	242	300	0.9%	1,596	689	963	-56	-0.4%

Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County, 2024Q2¹

SOC	Occupation	Current					5-Year History			2-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Mean Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
21-0000	Community and Social Service	6,615	\$71,300	1.05	433	6.1%	868	327	1.0%	1,184	477	668	39	0.3%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	5,784	\$116,800	0.53	345	4.2%	459	-220	-0.7%	696	250	413	32	0.3%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	5,378	\$79,800	0.87	441	7.3%	215	-214	-0.8%	983	419	598	-34	-0.3%
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	3,669	\$98,400	1.18	187	4.8%	371	85	0.5%	642	119	520	2	0.0%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering	3,225	\$115,000	0.59	159	3.7%	300	6	0.0%	410	153	258	-1	0.0%
23-0000	Legal	1,740	\$140,700	0.61	33	1.7%	85	-117	-1.3%	174	80	105	-10	-0.3%
Total - All Occupations		342,404	\$68,500	1.00	26,727	6.8%	16,954	2,629	0.2%	78,648	33,474	46,559	-1,385	-0.2%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

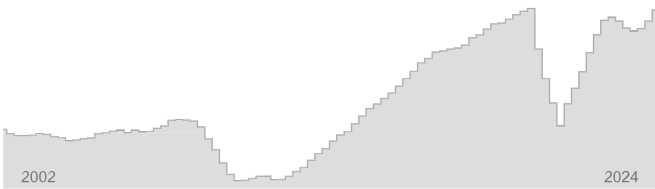
Data as of 2024Q2 unless noted otherwise
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

- ¹. Data is based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.
- ². Wage data represent the average for all Covered Employment
- ³. Data represent found online ads active within the last thirty days in the selected region. Due to alternative county-assignment algorithms, ad counts in this analytic may not match that shown in RTI (nor in the popup window ad list). Ad counts for ZCTA-based regions are estimates.

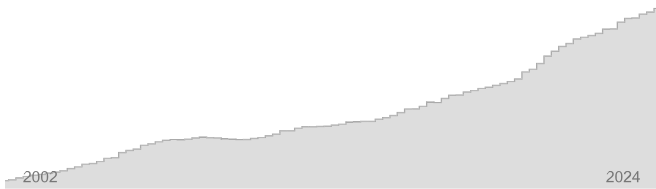
Occupation employment data are estimated via industry employment data and the estimated industry/occupation mix. Industry employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and currently updated through 2024Q1, imputed where necessary with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q2. Wages by occupation are as of 2024 provided by the BLS and imputed where necessary. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Occupation Snapshot, Cont'd

EMPLOYMENT



WAGES

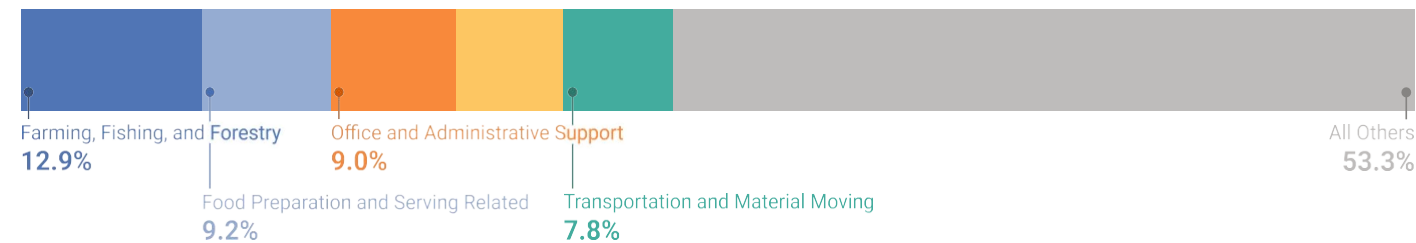


2-Digit Industry	Empl	Avg Ann Wage s	LQ	5yr History	Annua l Deman d	Forecast Ann Growth
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	65,219	\$52,752	15.57		7,862	-0.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	44,556	\$73,376	0.87		4,610	0.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	36,738	\$35,583	1.23		6,467	-0.1%
Educational Services	31,234	\$71,628	1.13		2,619	-0.9%
Retail Trade	29,975	\$42,746	0.89		3,791	-1.0%
Public Administration	19,827	\$91,254	1.24		1,743	-0.3%
Construction	17,255	\$70,178	0.85		1,451	-0.1%
Manufacturing	16,769	\$82,103	0.62		1,669	-0.1%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	14,412	\$48,499	0.69		1,610	-0.2%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	13,092	\$44,449	0.90		1,466	-0.1%
Remaining Component Industries	53,329	\$93,663	0.52		5,236	-0.3%
Total - All Industries	342,404	\$62,980	1.00		36,423	-0.2%

Employment is one of the broadest and most timely measures of a region’s economy. Fluctuations in the number of jobs shed light on the health of an industry. A growing employment base creates more opportunities for regional residents and helps a region grow its population.

Since wages and salaries generally compose most of a household’s income, the annual average wages of a region affect its average household income, housing market, quality of life, and other socioeconomic indicators.

Staffing Pattern

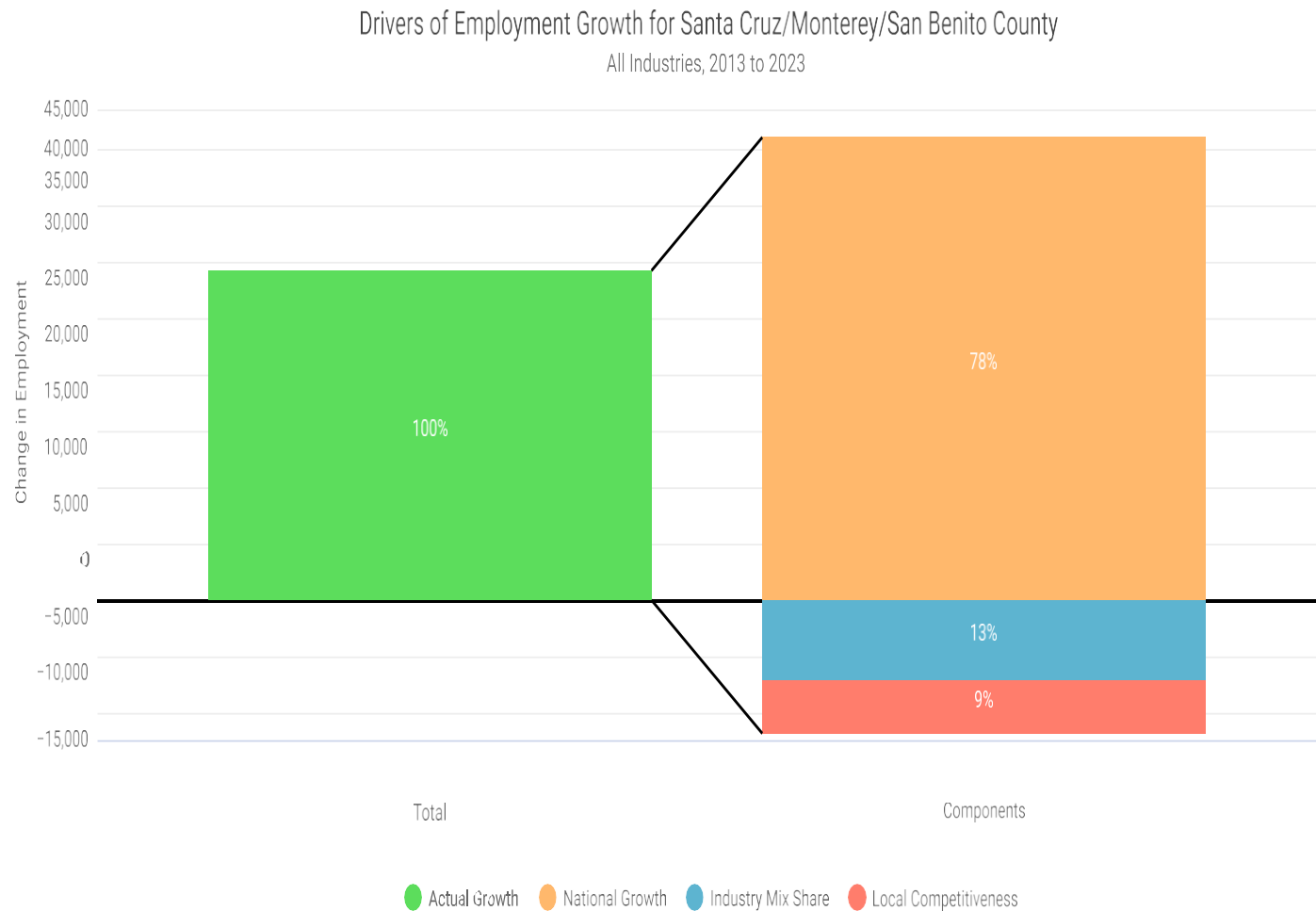


6-digit Occupation	Empl	Avg Ann Wages	Annual Demand
Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	37,730	\$39,600	5,534
Fast Food and Counter Workers	7,949	\$38,000	1,860
Personal Care Aides	7,792	\$35,900	1,267
Cashiers	6,776	\$38,500	1,099
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	6,303	\$123,400	673
Retail Salespersons	5,990	\$42,400	812
Registered Nurses	5,101	\$143,600	262
Waiters and Waitresses	5,014	\$49,200	991
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	4,964	\$42,700	640
Office Clerks, General	4,883	\$49,800	492
Remaining Component Occupations	249,901	\$86,600	25,705
Total	342,404		

The mix of occupations points to the ability of a region to support an industry and its flexibility to adapt to future demand. Industry wages are a component of the cost of labor for regional employers.

Drivers of Employment Growth

Over the ten years ending 2023, employment in Total - All Industries for the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region added 29,219 jobs. After adjusting for national growth during this period and industry mix share, the part of this employment change due to local competitiveness was a loss of 4,710 jobs—meaning this industry was less competitive than its national counterpart during this period.



Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2023Q4

Shift-share analysis sheds light on the factors that drive regional employment growth in an industry. A positive change in local competitiveness indicates advantages that may be due to factors such as superior technology, management, and labor pool, etc.

National growth is due to the overall growth or contraction in the national economy. Industry mix share is the growth attributable to the specific industries examined (based on national industry growth patterns and the industry mix of the region).

Employment Distribution by Type

The table below shows the employment mix by ownership type for Total - All Industries for the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region. Four of these ownership types — federal, state, and local government and the private sector — together constitute “Covered Employment” (employment covered by the Unemployment Insurance programs of the United States and reported via the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages). “Self-Employment” refers to unincorporated self-employment and represents workers whose primary job is self-employment (that is, these data do not include workers whose primary job is a wage-and-salary position that is supplemented with self-employment).



		Empl	%
<div></div>	Private	266,877	77.9%
<div></div>	Self-Employment	18,004	5.3%
<div></div>	Local Government	39,835	11.6%
<div></div>	State Government	10,676	3.1%
<div></div>	Federal Government	5,837	1.7%
<div></div>	Other non-covered	1,176	0.3%

Source: JobsEQ®

Strong entrepreneurial activity is indicative of growing industries. Using self-employment as a proxy for entrepreneurs, a higher share of self-employed individuals within a regional industry points to future growth.

Establishments

In 2023, there were 26,710 Total - All Industries establishments in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region (per covered employment establishment counts), an increase from 22,795 establishments ten years earlier in 2013. New business formations are an important source of job creation in a regional economy, spurring innovation and competition and driving productivity growth. Establishment data can provide an indicator of growth in businesses by counting each single location (such as a factory or a store) where business activity takes place with at least one employee.

Gross Domestic Product & Productivity

In 2023, Total - All Industries produced \$49 billion in GDP for the region. Gross domestic product (GDP) is the most comprehensive measure of regional economic activity, and an industry’s contribution to GDP is an important indicator of regional industry strength. It is a measure of total value- added to a regional economy in the form of labor income, proprietor’s income, and business profits, among others. Growth in productivity (output per worker) leads to increases in wealth and higher average standards of living in a region.

Regional Indicators

A key objective of Regional Planning efforts for San Benito, Sant Cruz, and Monterey Counties Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) is to connect AJCC services to a regional skills infrastructure that aligns with regional labor market needs. To further refine how progress is evaluated in the region, the indicators below are used to assess progress in the region and focus on the following:

The region has a process to communicate industry workforce needs to supply-side partners

The region is measuring progress against our metrics through collaborations with industry partners and sector champions on how the training needs that were identified by the region's industry partners are subsequently developed into training programs by staff and Board members in conjunction with supply-side partners such as training providers and higher education.

The region has policies supporting equity and strives to improve job quality

Measurement of this indicator includes development of benchmarks and methods to track workforce partner professional development training supporting equity and job quality. Equity goes beyond equality by providing varying levels of support based on a specific individual's needs or abilities. The regional WDBs have policies on Supportive Services, Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity, and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) that provide varying levels of support based on an individual's actual needs and abilities. In addition to supporting equity, the NCC RPU is focused on preparing individuals for quality jobs with living wages, good benefits, legal rights, predictable scheduling, a supportive work environment, safety and security, and worker voice.

The region has shared target populations of emphasis

The region has shared populations of emphasis for which it provides priority of service: veterans and their eligible spouses, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, including English language learners. The goal has been to consult with and convene as many community partners as possible to ensure a broad base of support for these populations, including adult schools, community colleges, industry champions, and service provider leadership. These convenings assist the region to develop the benchmarks and methods necessary to measure its progress in connecting with and serving its priority populations.

The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs

The NCC RPU coordinates with the Central Coast Business Engagement Roundtable that meets quarterly to discuss regional needs for Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities and includes Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. The Business Engagement Roundtable was established to support businesses in the region with their layoff and/or hiring needs along with incumbent worker training opportunities. At the quarterly meetings, the team hears from State EDD, the California Workforce Development Board, the California Labor Federation, the DOL and the Employment Training Panel for services and grant opportunities.

The quarterly roundtable is a useful resource for the broad region to provide services, training and education to meet the needs of both business and job seekers, with a focus on shared target populations. Based on information from these meetings, a survey goes out to the region's workforce development board directors to learn what each of the entities is looking for in training opportunities for their staff and partner staff. The Lead

Agency Training Coordinator then obtains contracts with training providers to meet those needs and offers several training opportunities to the teams on a quarterly basis.

The NCC RPU and broader region have found this to be an excellent resource to provide the appropriate services, training and education based on our employer's needs.

State which two of the four regional indicators the RPU selected, and the objective metrics established for each indicator chosen.

The objectives the region chose early on and still remain are:

1. The region has shared target populations of emphasis; and
2. The region deploys shared/pooled resources to provide services, training, and education to meet the target population's needs.

Provide an assessment of the impacts, lessons learned, and progress on tracking and evaluating the regionally agreed metrics

Measuring and achieving the goals associated with the chosen regional indicators are approached through several strategies:

1. **Baseline Assessment:** Initially conducting a comprehensive assessment of the current knowledge levels, practices, and outcomes related to workforce development among WDB and partner staff. This served as a baseline against which progress could be measured.
2. **Training Programs:** once surveys were developed to share with all WDB and Partner staff, the region implemented targeted training programs designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of WDB and partner staff in various aspects of workforce development, including but not limited to:
 - Strategies for effective engagement with businesses, colleges, and job seekers.
 - Understanding and promoting living wage job opportunities.
 - Equity-focused approaches to workforce development.
 - Skills training and career pathways development.
3. **Performance Metrics:** Establishing specific performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress towards the goals. These metrics have included:
 - Increase in the number of living wage jobs created in the region.
 - Improvement in job quality indicators (e.g., wages, benefits, job stability).
 - Increase in income mobility among job seekers and workers.
 - Participation rates in skills training programs.
 - Feedback from businesses, colleges, and job seekers on the effectiveness of WDB and partner services (surveys upon completion of training offered)
4. **Partnership and Collaboration:** Facilitating collaboration and partnerships between WDB, partners, businesses, colleges, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, share best practices, and develop innovative solutions for workforce development. Although this remains a goal in the collaboration efforts, it can be a challenge in delivery. We continue to work on this aspect of partnership and collaboration.
5. **Continuous Evaluation and Adjustment:** Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of training programs and initiatives implemented and making necessary adjustments based on feedback from those participating in the training programs. This involves conducting surveys and performance reviews to gather insights and identify areas for improvement.
6. **Documentation and Reporting:** Maintaining thorough documentation of activities, outcomes, and lessons learned. Regular reporting to funding agencies and stakeholders helps to ensure transparency and accountability while also providing opportunities to celebrate successes and address challenges when appropriate.

By employing these strategies, the region's progress is being measured and achieved by systematically improving the knowledge, skills, and practices of the three WDBs and partner staff, ultimately leading to the desired outcomes of increased equity, job quality, income mobility, and industry-led partnerships focused on skills training for workforce development.

Fostering Demand-Driven Skills Attainment

The NCC RPU frequently catalyzes conversations between regional employers and regional education providers. The RPU knows that direct connections and communications between the supply and demand side of the talent economy can alleviate inefficiencies and increase the effectiveness of education and training programs available. Besides serving as the connector between these two groups, the RPU works to sponsor events like career fairs to help students get face—or screen time—with regional employers.

Focusing on opportunities that will provide workers with sustainable wages and upward career mobility in established and growing sectors in the region is a top priority of the RPU. The RPU also recognizes that connecting jobseekers and High Road employers will play a crucial role in the North Central Coast region's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This section of the Regional Plan identifies key industry clusters and sustainable-wage occupational pathways within those industry clusters. This data will serve as guidance for the RPU and partners in the region.

Identify the In-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region

The highest in-demand industry sectors for the region include:

- Healthcare
- Construction
- Information Technology/Cyber Security
- Hospitality/Tourism
- Agriculture

Regional Sector Pathways

Industry clusters are important because they provide a coherent picture of the local economy and opportunities for development or growth. Industry clusters can also have multiplier effects, as firms within clusters attract similar workforces, attracting more employers and creating a feedback loop that strengthens the local labor market. Focusing on specific industry clusters allows the RPU and other workforce development stakeholders to leverage the region's economic comparative advantages and develop robust education and training programs to support a qualified workforce. The NCC RPU uses the data below to help inform, develop, and revise regional programs and initiatives.

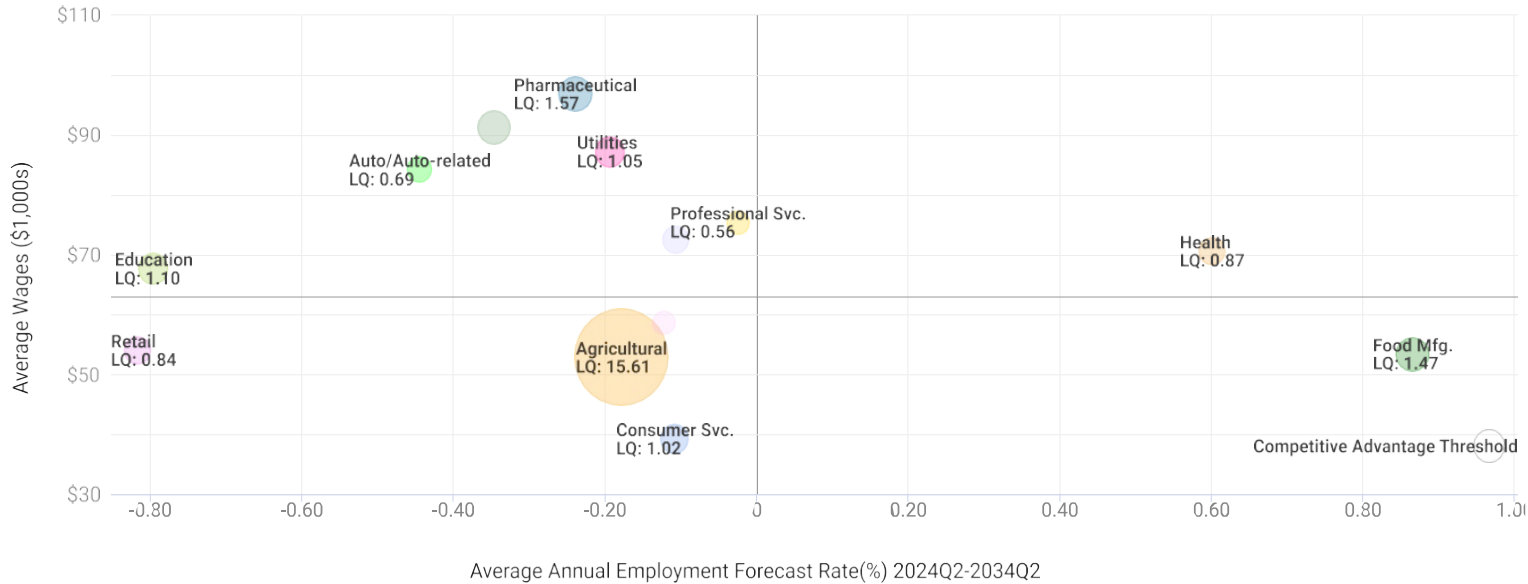
Two of the five highest-earning industry clusters in the North Central Coast region declined in size between 2014 and 2019. These high-earning clusters, where workers earn between \$83,500 and \$184,400 per year (including benefits) on average, include Healthcare, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and Finance, Insurance, Banking, and Real Estate (FIRE), and often require highly educated and technologically skilled workers.

In-demand Industry Clusters

A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. The industry cluster in the Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County region with the highest relative concentration is Agricultural with a location quotient of 15.61. This cluster employs 65,333 workers in the region with an average wage of \$52,987.

Employment in the Agricultural cluster is projected to contract in the region about 0.2% per year over the next ten years.

Industry Clusters for Santa Cruz/Monterey/San Benito County as of 2024Q2



Location quotient and average wage data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, imputed where necessary, and updated through 2024Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2024Q2. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Source: Jobs EQ Data as of 2024Q2

Please note that the size of the location quotient “bubble” reflects the relative number employed in the industry.

Development and implementation of current and new sector-based initiatives planned for the next four years that address the needs of regionally in-demand industries or occupations

As the North NCC RPU advances its workforce development strategy, local leadership shares a unified vision for sector-specific initiatives in regionally in-demand industries. The primary objectives are to:

- Assess and expand existing local programs to maximize their impact across the region.
- Align workforce development efforts with employer and industry needs.
- Enhance collaboration with regional and state partners to drive innovation and talent development.

Priority Industry Sectors

The NCC RPU is focused on identifying high-growth, high-demand industries that offer sustainable wages and career advancement opportunities. Key sectors targeted for regional expansion include:

Healthcare – Continued growth in healthcare occupations requires expanded training and career pathways.

Construction – Increased demand for skilled labor and apprenticeship opportunities supports workforce development.

Cybersecurity – The rise in digital threats and demand for IT security professionals drives the need for specialized training.

Advanced Manufacturing – Technological advancements in automation and precision engineering create new job opportunities.

Healthcare, Information & Communications Technology (ICT), and Biotechnology/Biomedical Devices were identified as key sectors in the previous four-year regional plan, and continued employer and educational demand necessitates further investment and program expansion in these clusters.

Regional Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships

The NCC RPU recognizes its strategic proximity to the Bay Area, a hub for economic growth and technological innovation. To strengthen regional alignment and workforce development efforts, the NCC RPU continues to collaborate with:

- ◆ Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) – Facilitating a broader understanding of talent needs across the region.
- ◆ Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships (RERP) Grant – Fostering cooperation between tri-county WDBs, community colleges, and employers, and breaking down geographical and programmatic silos.
- ◆ State and Local Industry Partners – Engaging with employers, training providers, and educational institutions to enhance program development and accessibility.

This collaborative approach ensures that regional workforce programs remain responsive, aligned, and scalable beyond the term of the RERP grant.

Addressing Challenges in Low-Wage Industries

Despite these efforts, the NCC region continues to experience high employment rates in consumer services and agriculture—both of which are traditionally low-wage sectors. To address this, the RPU is exploring strategies to:

- Support workforce mobility by providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities.
- Increase career pathways that lead to higher-wage, sustainable employment.
- Enhance employer engagement to identify opportunities for wage growth and career advancement.

By prioritizing high-demand industries, fostering regional collaboration, and addressing persistent workforce challenges, the NCC RPU aims to drive economic mobility and create a more resilient workforce.

Describe the RPU processes or strategies used to communicate effectively and cohesively with regional employers

The region's long term strategy to communicate effectively and cohesively with regional employers is to do the following:

- 1) WDBs to act as the conduit to hold quarterly meetings with partners, including WDBs, employers, and community colleges, and invite guest speakers so all gain knowledge of how the parts of the system can work together to generate informed and trained job seekers.
- 2) Continue to move workers to the next level (occupational tier) by helping them develop the skills and knowledge to move up the career ladder.
- 3) Remain committed, as a region, to developing programs that connect current employers and workers with the training and educational providers that will allow them the flexibility to complete a certificate, a degree, or specialized training while they work.

Enabling Upward Mobility for All Californians

Improving job quality and the ability for upward career progression for those in entry-level roles will be essential determinants of the North Central Coast region's continued recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This section of the Regional Plan focuses on how the North Central Coast region can improve the economic security for its residents through support and collaboration with High Road employers and improving accessibility to High Road jobs for historically underserved populations.

Throughout this plan, several industry clusters and career pathways are highlighted. The North Central Coast RPU prioritizes training programs within these select industry clusters and career pathways so that the result of the programs is often a High Road job, regardless of the employer. In cases where a High Road job may not be a typical outcome for that occupation, the RPU aims to collaborate specifically with employers who support the tenets of High Road employment: living wages, benefits, good working conditions, and adequate hours with predictable scheduling.

The region's policies for supporting equity and improving job quality

The region has conducted several research efforts to understand where High Road jobs are and the pathways to provide entry into these occupations. This knowledge is the first step in prioritizing job quality. The research allows the RPU to collaborate deliberately with employers and community colleges to help fill gaps in training and skills that lead to these High Road jobs.

The region also recognizes in the context of the post-Covid-19 economy that the data, including some of the data in this plan, reflects losses among many lower-paid and lower-quality employment opportunities. The RPU sees this as a call to action and an opportunity to help workers transition to entry points among in-

demand and higher-quality positions. With the research in hand, the RPU and partners lead the development and support of specific programs that lead to high-quality jobs, such as Advanced Manufacturing, Drone Technology, Aviation, and others that are growing clusters in the region.

Survey data from regional employers also suggests that many businesses are looking to reshore their supply chains, increasingly looking for suppliers within the state and the North Central Coast region. Amazon's large warehouses are an example of the North Central Coast region seeing an increase in demand for the production and distribution of materials and goods, bolstering demand for typically well-paying manufacturing and distribution roles. The region will continue to collaborate with employers, monitor the situation, and act proactively with employers, community colleges, adult education, the Department of Rehabilitation and others to proactively ensure that there is a workforce prepared to meet these new demands.

Advancing economic prosperity of shared target populations

The North Central Coast RPU believes in decent wages, working conditions, and economic growth. The RPU promotes inclusive, sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and quality jobs for all.

High Road Workforce System

Under the leadership of the State of California's Workforce Development Board, the vision for the future of workforce development is centered on the establishment and growth of a High Road Workforce system. The High Road Workforce system is focused on meaningful industry engagement and placement in quality jobs that provide economic security.

How the RPU promotes job quality and commits to working with employers to improve job quality and access to jobs

The High Road Workforce system and job quality are important measures of a region's labor market. The RPU and its local partners believe that High Road jobs offering living wages, benefits, and support for quality of life are an essential component of workforce development. The RPU works to enhance the awareness and availability of high-quality jobs and is working to develop strategies, including the work with our four regional community colleges to drive High Road jobs forward. The RPU strives to support and promote opportunities that lead to high-quality jobs and formalize these commitments into the future. Thus far, the RPU has conducted several research efforts – largely through the development of special grants – to understand where High Road jobs are and the pathways that provide entry into these occupations, which is the first step in prioritizing job quality. The research allows the RPU to collaborate with employers and community colleges to help fill gaps in training and skills that lead to these High Road jobs.

How the RPU integrates targeted service strategies (education, workforce training and family resources) for the region's unserved and underserved communities

The RPU currently provides education, workforce training, and family resources through its partner organizations, including the AJCCs' One Stop services for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. The RPU integrates targeted service strategies through the One-Stop partners in each local area, offering surveys regularly to participants seeking assistance from WIOA programs so the partners can learn and implement solutions and mitigations to the problems faced by unserved and underserved communities.

Climate and Environmental Sustainability

How the RPU is working towards meeting industry and workforce needs to support a climate-neutral transition

As California moves toward a carbon-neutral economy, entire industries are changing, along with the jobs, skills, and knowledge necessary to perform those jobs. The North Central Coast region is also experiencing these changes. One large employer, the Moss Landing Power Plant, has changed in that it is now a natural gas-fired power station as well as a battery energy storage facility. The changes require added skill sets to keep the plant up and running 24/7, and the RPU works to understand the training and skill sets needed to ensure a climate-neutral transition.

California and the region have been at the forefront of zero-emission vehicles and charging stations, along with offshore wind turbines being discussed for the north central coast. Solar power has developed exponentially in the last 10 years in the region, providing climate change mitigation and management. All of these changes require the RPU to learn and understand the environmental impacts to the industry sectors, job loss, job growth, and new skill demands, as well as how to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on regional target populations of emphasis.

The RPU meets regularly with employers, partners, community colleges, CBOs, and others to ensure the new skill demands of a climate-neutral environment are being developed to meet the new demands of Industry.

Equity and Economic Justice

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed some of the existing racial and economic inequalities in the North Central Coast that continue today. The pandemic and regional wildfires and severe storm events have added greater importance to the RPU's role in ensuring access and equal opportunities are available to all interested individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic status. The North Central Coast RPU has prioritized formalizing a policy around ensuring equal access to opportunities.

The RPU relies upon demographic and census data to identify and target outreach efforts to specific populations in need throughout the North Central Coast region. North Central Coast One Stops are intentionally located in areas closest to populations most likely to use them and are the RPU's primary point of contact with in-need populations. This makes One Stops and their work crucial to ensuring programs and opportunities are available to all who seek them. This includes providing services or referring customers to other providers so that an individual with multiple needs can receive support for each of their needs. The RPU will support the One Stop operators throughout the region to hold regular meetings and communicate openly, sharing best practices, challenges, and partnership opportunities.

The RPU offers outreach and support through regular monthly meetings between community-based organizations (CBOs), One Stops, and other stakeholders. CBOs and their grassroots-level work within communities are often the RPU's greatest asset in accessing its target populations. Many of these CBOs provide a range of support services to these individuals, who often face multiple employment barriers. Removal of all the barriers facing a job seeker provides the individual with the best chances of success. Removing these barriers also requires cooperation and coordination across several entities, including CBOs, One Stops, educational institutions, and support services like childcare and transportation. The RPU helps foster communication and connections between these stakeholders to mitigate barriers and maximize job seekers' chances of completing their programs and entering the workforce.

The North Central Coast RPU also continues to support the “Prison to Employment 2.0” or “P2E 2.0” program, which assists formerly incarcerated individuals in navigating the array of barriers to the re-entry process. P2E 2.0 helps formerly incarcerated individuals access support services, earn and learn opportunities, career pathways, and braided resources. This program is made possible through the collaboration and coordination of dozens of regional stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders are CBOs and non-profits, such as the Goodwill Central Coast, the 5Cities Homeless Coalition, Community Solutions, MILPA Collective, and Veteran’s Transition Center, among others. The RPU also works with several local Department of Corrections offices, state agencies, educators, and employer champions. The North Central Coast aims to carry this extensive collaboration into other initiatives around the region going forward.

The region’s strategy to achieve equity and commitments to ensure equitable access to regional sector pathways earn-and-learn opportunities, supportive services, and other effective service strategies identified by the RPU

The RPU shares information regularly through WIOA partner meetings to ensure all partners have access to demographic and census data so that service strategies are designed around all partners’ input. Additionally, needs surveys are provided to potential program participants. Customer and partner inputs are collected and analyzed to create and implement programs that address the training and upskilling needs of regional industries.

The region’s commitments to ensure equitable access to regional sector pathways earn-and-learn opportunities and supportive services include an ongoing discussion among the directors of the regional WDBs regarding a regional Priority of Service policy and implementing the same caps on supportive services across the region such that all individuals in the region receive the same maximum level of support.

Along with WIOA training and employment opportunities, the region seeks regionwide grants to offer specialized training opportunities, including the High Road Construction Careers: SB1 grant provided through the Monterey Bay Collaborative; the High Road Construction Careers: Resilient Workforce Funds grant, also provided through the Monterey Bay Collaborative; the Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships grant; and the Prison to Employment (P2E) 2.0 grant led by the San Benito County WDB.

Aligning, Coordinating, and Integrating Programs and Services

This section of the Regional Plan discusses the current state and future aspirations for cooperation and collaboration by regional partners to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of resources and to serve target populations better. As a region containing parts of old systems, the North Central Coast RPU is in a position to build off of the collaborative efforts that worked well in the past while also building new systems with new partners.

As discussed above, the RPU offers outreach and support through regular monthly meetings between community-based organizations (CBOs), One Stops, and other stakeholders. CBOs and their grassroots-level work within communities are often the RPU’s greatest asset in accessing its target populations. Many of these CBOs provide a range of support services to these individuals, who often face multiple employment barriers. Removal of all the barriers facing a job seeker provides the individual with the best chances of success. Removing these barriers also requires cooperation and coordination across several entities, including CBOs, One Stops, educational institutions, and support services like childcare and transportation. The RPU helps foster communication and connections between these stakeholders to mitigate barriers and maximize job seekers’ chances of completing their programs and entering the workforce.

System Alignment

The NCC RPU continues discussions around identifying and aligning the priorities of the RPU. While some of these discussions are around creating a new MOU, cost referrals, and training referrals, the RPU is also discussing opportunities to expand collaboration around joint rapid response and employer engagement. One area of interest is the introduction of a regionwide virtual job fair. When all traditional job fairs were canceled due to public health concerns, a regionwide virtual job fair had the opportunity to connect residents from all three counties to a wide range of hiring employers. The RPU is also discussing re-energizing the regional website for all partners to the NCC RPU. The regional website provides a list of regionwide services, programs, and initiatives that business and job seekers can access.

Regional Service Strategies, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements or Memorandums of understanding (MOU), devised to support a more responsive system

While formal details of administrative cost-sharing agreements continue to be discussed, the RPU has developed a regional procurement structure for consultants, which has saved the local partners time and effort, eliminating the need to re-procure services for each RPU member.

How the region establishes administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs for the region

Although the region has not established an arrangement for the pooling of funds for administrative costs, the region has developed procurement procedures to allow the regional WDBs access to the same information and processes, allowing for regionwide administrative cost savings.

Appendices

Appendix A: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

Development of comprehensive plans entails building broad and inclusive partnerships with regional and local entities in a variety of sectors. This includes engaging with employers, labor organizations, and community-based organizations as well as WIOA core, required, and strategic program partners to ensure the inclusion of person-centered approaches to addressing multifaceted barriers to employment by utilizing input from the communities themselves.

Stakeholders participating in the planning processes include, but are not limited to, employers, labor organizations, education partners, human services, and housing partners as well as community-based organizations that provide services to shared target populations such as the following: justice-involved, English language learners, refugees, immigrants, youth, older adults, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and any other entities supporting historically unserved or underserved communities.

Using the template below, Regional Planning Units and Local Workforce Development Boards provide a detailed description of how meaningful stakeholder involvement and community engagement was achieved when developing the 2025-28 WIOA Regional and Local Plans.

Mode of Outreach: January 15, 2025, public meeting from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Target of Outreach: Public, Community Partners, and Business.

Summary of Attendance: Representatives from the State of California Employment Development Department; California's Department of Rehabilitation; staff from Santa Cruz County, Monterey County, and San Benito County workforce development boards.

Comments:

- Establishing data sharing agreements may help with collaboration.
- There should be regional events for employers to be educated about disabilities and the resources available to assist this population.
- Another way to learn about viable alternative priority industry sectors would be to research what conferences are happening in each local area.
- Finance, Banking, Insurance, and Real Estate are difficult industries for participants due to licensing requirements. Those who pursue those careers are also typically self-sufficient and get there on their own.
- Another profession that is emerging is dentistry.
- We should partner with school districts to educate youth on various career paths and available resources so that they are better prepared to enter the workforce.
- The referral form should be uploaded onto the website for use with a feature to track overall progress.
- A regional referral process and network list should be established.

- A large barrier that prevents partners from making referrals is the legal status requirement for participants.
- Concerns were expressed regarding limited language and translation information for the Indigenous community in Monterey County. One idea would be to reach out to Behavioral Health Interpreting Services that use LanguageLine Solutions and Binational Center for the Development of Caxcan Indigenous Communities, also known as Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueno, which provides interpretation services to the Indigenous population of Monterey County.

Mode of Outreach: January 16, 2025, Zoom meeting from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Target of Outreach: Public, Community Partners, CBOs, Education, Business.

Summary of Attendance: Child Support Services, State of California Employment Development Department, Small Business Development Council, staff to the Monterey County Workforce Development Board.

Comments:

Child Support Services:

- There are challenges relating to getting clients' authorization signatures to be referred out to the MC Works programs, including other partners' programs.
- Clients are not willing to take extra steps to meet with WDBs to find employment.
- Legal status is a barrier for some entities which are unable to refer their clients for services because they are not eligible due to State or federal eligibility requirements.
- If clients have a disability, they do not want to disclose it.
- Partnering with WIOA providers is different compared to other partners – more stringent.

Employment Development Department:

- The region needs a process where there is a point of contact for the partners when making referrals would be beneficial.
- Working to get disabled veterans back to the workforce – and facing transportation barriers.

Small Business Development Council:

- Language and technology barriers exist and should be addressed.
- Pathways are needed for clients and to be able to refer them to different resources for client needs.
- Assistance with retention is highly needed for family services applicants to keep them in a program.
- Some customers are forced into the program; otherwise, they will lose benefits, meaning they are not willing participants, making it challenging for them to reach success.
- Language barriers are based on different nationalities and languages.
- In need of home-based businesses in the region, such as home childcare services, cottage restaurants, food trucks.

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Staff to the Monterey County Workforce Development Board:

- Possibility of a regional referral process. Everyone is housed in the same building to meet individual needs. Regional networking list, TEAMS Channel, regional meetings with Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties.

Mode of Outreach: January 23, 2025, Zoom meeting from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. and Zoom follow-up meeting on February 10, 2025, 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Target of Outreach: Education, community colleges.

Summary of Attendance: Cabrillo Community College, Hartnell Community College, Monterey Peninsula College, Gavilan Community College, Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) Regional Director for Workforce Partnerships.

Comments:

- Idea of co-locating services at the AJCC with Gavilan College leadership.
- Idea of submitting formal written comments on Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) recommendations, with WDBs continuing to advocate for ETPL system reform.
- Community colleges and WDBs to consider formalizing agreements beyond the Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships (RERP) grant.
- Community colleges and WDBs to explore opportunities for regional cross-training.
- Idea of helping to organize an in-person regional meeting or conference for all stakeholders, including Business.
- The Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito County WDBs have invested extensive time and resources to build cross-system collaboration with their local community colleges well beyond the RERP grant. This work is not easy and is often faced with systemic barriers.
- The ETPL is one of those large intersection points where the WDBs and community colleges alike face significant challenges. A statewide workgroup has convened over the past year to address the ETPL reform necessary for true, cross-system collaboration. For the first time in California's history, a unified voice across community colleges, WDBs, adult schools, and regional occupational programs is calling for SYSTEM CHANGE. As the WDBs outline their strategic focus moving forward, it is recommended that they consider supporting the ETPL recommendations below, when possible:
 1. Request a waiver for initial eligibility for State and public accredited programs.
 2. Eliminate additional State requirements imposed on the local ETPL.
 3. Reduce continued eligibility review requirements from annually to every 2 years.
 4. Require State agencies to provide existing wage data.
 5. Streamline CalJOBS enrollment for training providers.
 6. Allow private providers to come within 10% of meeting any three of the five WIOA training provider goals.

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Appendix B: Public Comments received that disagree with the Regional Plan

No comments were received that disagreed with the North Central Coast Regional Planning Unit's 2025-28 Regional Plan.

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Appendix C: Signature Page

By signing below, the Local Board Chairs request approval of the North Central Coast’s 2025-28 Regional Plan.

Local Board Chairs

Local Board Chairs

Local Board Chairs

Signed by:

Signature

DocuSigned by:

Signature


Signature

Erik Cushman
Name

Rob Morse
Name

Chuck Frowein
Name

Monterey County
Workforce
Development Board
Chair
Title

Santa Cruz County
Workforce
Development Board
Chair
Title

San Benito County
Workforce
Development Board
Chair
Title

4/11/2025 | 9:43 AM PDT
Date

4/10/2025 | 6:55 PM PDT
Date

4/9/25
Date

Certificate Of Completion

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Source Envelope:

Document Pages: 51

Signatures: 1

Envelope Originator:

Certificate Pages: 5

Initials: 0

HSD CCU

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Stamps: 1

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Envelopeld Stamping: Enabled

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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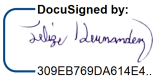
Pool: County of Santa Cruz

Location: Docusign

Signer Events

Felipe Hernandez
Felipe.Hernandez@santacruzcountyca.gov
Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

Signature



Signature Adoption: Uploaded Signature Image
Using IP Address: 63.194.190.100

Timestamp

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Signed: 5/21/2025 2:04:16 PM

Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure:

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CBD eSignature
cbd.esignature@santacruzcountyca.gov
County of Santa Cruz
Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

Signed



Using IP Address: 75.238.192.228

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Freeform Signing

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In Person Signer Events

Signature

Timestamp

Editor Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Agent Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Intermediary Delivery Events

Status

Timestamp

Certified Delivery Events

Status

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Carbon Copy Events

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Timestamp

Witness Events

Signature

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Notary Events

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Envelope Summary Events	Status	Timestamps
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Completed	Security Checked	5/30/2025 9:42:38 AM

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