



EDC Annual Report

2024 - 2025

Table of Contents

Board of Directors	3
Mission Statement	3
Foundation Sponsors	4
Business Services	5
Business Diversity	6
Workforce Innovation	7
Creative Sonoma	8
Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District	10
Access Sonoma Broadband	11
Events	13
Research Initiatives	15

EDC Advisory Board

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Ethan Brown

CHAIR: Kathryn Philip

Skip Brand

Linda Kachiu

Jordan Kivelstadt

Wayne Leach

Regina Mahiri

Richard Marzo

Nick Schwanz

Meilin Tsao

Mission Statement

The Economic Development Collaborative is dedicated to building accessible pathways to lasting economic vitality through meaningful partnerships and targeted initiatives. Guided by inclusivity, integrity, and accountability, we provide services, conduct research, and shape policies to support economic opportunity from ideation to realization.

Foundation Sponsors

PRESENTING LEVEL



PREMIERE LEVEL



EXECUTIVE LEVEL

Morgan Stanley

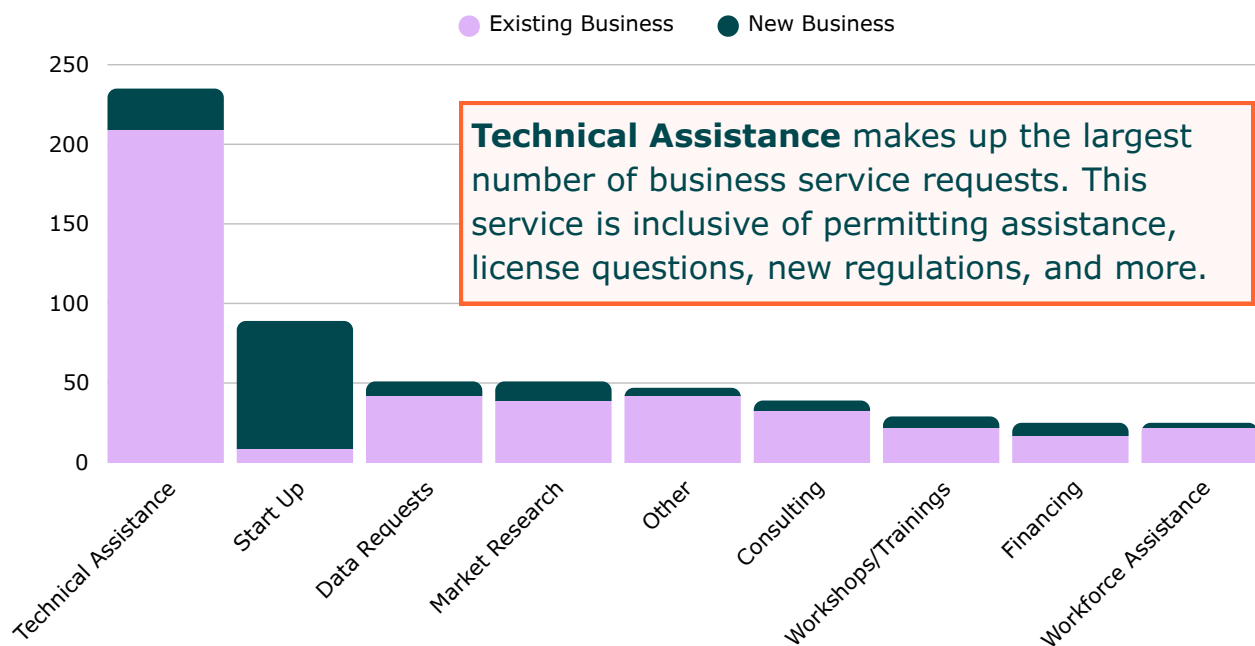
North Bay Association of Realtors

BUSINESS SERVICES + CREATIVE SONOMA

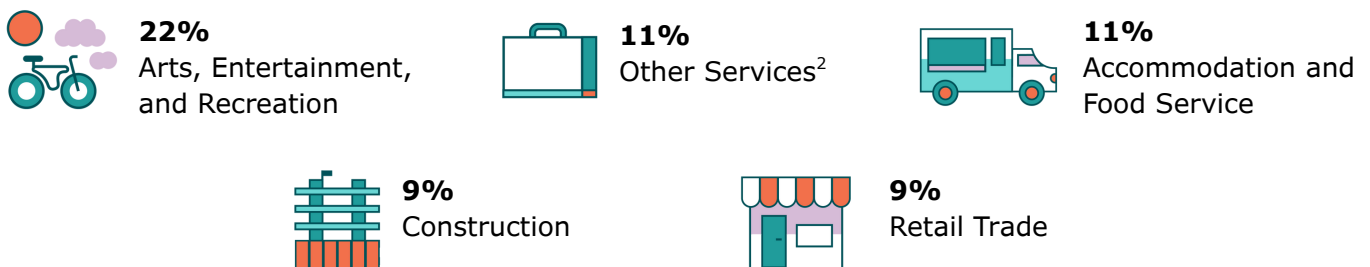
One-On-One Business Assistance

EDC's **Business Services and Creative Sonoma Teams** provide an array of one-on-one, free business assistance. Whether someone is just starting out, or they are decades into their business, EDC staff is here to support their pursuits. In the past year¹, the teams **fulfilled 599 service requests and assisted 488 businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs.**

SERVICES PROVIDED



TOP 5 INDUSTRIES ASSISTED



¹Business services statistics show activity from May 1, 2024 through April 30, 2025.

²Other Services are inclusive of personal care, hair salons, and nonprofit organizations.

BUSINESS SERVICES

Business Diversity & Inclusion

The EDC Business Diversity Program is dedicated to **breaking down barriers and creating opportunities** for historically underserved community members. Through culturally responsive programming, EDC is able to bring services and resources to our community in new and impactful ways.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Community Impact Network:** Monthly convening of business and community resource providers to foster better communication and collaborate on common goals.
- **Vamos al Tianguis:** Vamos and EDC launched Healdsburg's first-ever Summer Tianguis (Night Markets), showcasing local culture and emerging businesses.
- **Spanish Summer Workshop Series:** In-person Spanish workshops for aspiring food start-up entrepreneurs, covering topics from regulatory compliance to effective business strategies.
- **Shine Bright Breakfast:** Event partnership with LIME Foundation discussing critical business and workforce resources.
- **TrailbazHER Women's Conference:** Partnered with SoCo Market to spotlight local women entrepreneurs and connect attendees with valuable business resources.



TrailblazHER Womens Conference, October 2024.



Opportunity Fair at Sonoma County Juvenile Hall

BUSINESS SERVICES

Workforce Innovation

Our workforce is a critical piece to a health economy. Providing opportunities for people to upskill and access education is an important pathway to economic prosperity for our workforce.

EDC, in partnership with the Workforce Investment Board and Job Link, help bridge the gap between businesses and workers through meaningful connections.

HIGHLIGHTS



Facilitated workshops at Sonoma County Juvenile Hall on **career and educational pathways**, providing individual guidance to youth based on their interests and experiences. The workshops culminated in an Opportunity Fair at Sonoma County Juvenile Hall. **25 businesses and organizations** connected with youth about career and educational opportunities.





Launched **Opportunity Employment Reports** on manufacturing, healthcare, and construction. The reports highlight average incomes, most in demand jobs and skills, and projected employment growth for the industry. Reports are used to better inform career pipelines into these industries.


Creative Sonoma

Creative Sonoma, a division of EDC, supports and advances the creative community of Sonoma County through programs and services to meet the needs of individual artists, arts and culture organizations, and creative businesses:

Events

 **18** workshops, mixers, and convenings with a total of **341 attendees**.

 **Arts Ed Symposium:** Presented professional learning and networking to **18 arts organizations** and **15 school districts**.

 **Poetry Out Loud:** Partnered with California Poets in the Schools to offer programs to 9 high schools with **2,537 students and 22 teachers** participating.

Grants

Received \$217,000+ in grants. Grant dollars were used to help implement **2 grants programs**, providing **\$306,580 to 64 grantees**:

- **Arts Impact Grants for Organizations** to sustain Sonoma County's arts and culture nonprofit organizations.
- **District 5 Community Public Art Project Grants** to support creative projects in unincorporated Fifth District locations.



CREATIVE SONOMA

Professional Development



Partnered with organizations to create **professional development programs**:

- Sebastopol Center for the Art's Emerging Artist Incubator Program
- Kimzin Creative's BIPOC Producers Lab



Supported **cohort of 5 community arts centers** with site visits and best practices for sustainable growth.



Facilitated **cohort of District Arts Leaders** representing 8 school districts.

Arts Education



Hosted 7 meetings of **Arts Educators Workforce Committee** and launched **#TEACHtheARTS campaign**, including a new resource webpage.



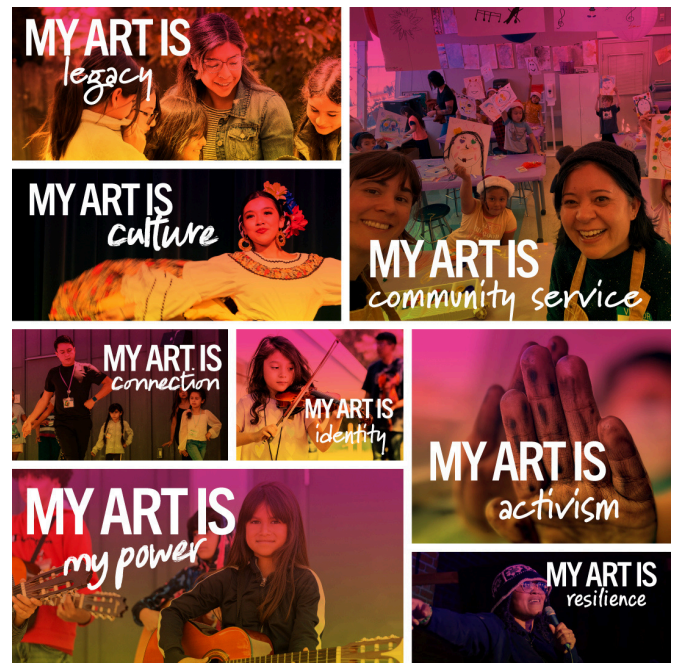
Created an updated **county arts education plan** with a team of 10 leading arts education experts.



Partnered to convene **5 countywide meetings for education leaders** from arts organizations including providing information about **Prop 28**.



Partnered to facilitate the 2nd Annual **Sonoma County Arts Educator of the Year Award**.



#TEACHtheARTS campaign. The campaign helps foster workforce pipelines for becoming an arts educator. With the passage of Prop 28, providing yearly funding for arts education in CA public TK-12 schools, demand for arts educators will continue to increase.



Biomass Symposium in Sonoma and Mendocino counties, May 2024.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District

Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District (SMEDD) is a **two-county partnership** that engages in regional economic development planning. SMEDD oversees the implementation of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

HIGHLIGHTS



Hosted **Biomass Utilization Symposium** attended by 150+ participants including foresters, tribes, academia, elected officials, agencies, CAL Fire, climate groups, and more.



Supported **SMART's Transit and Intercity Rail Capital application**, which was awarded \$81 million. SMEDD also supported various applications that further moved forward key goals in the CEDS, totaling to \$6 million+ in awards.



Engaged with Bay Area Jobs First Collaborative on developing and **Ag-Tech Innovation Hub** in the North Bay.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Access Sonoma Broadband

Access Sonoma Broadband is an ongoing initiative at EDC to work with communities to **close the digital divide** through infrastructure design and deployment, access, affordability, and implementing digital equity in Sonoma County.

BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT



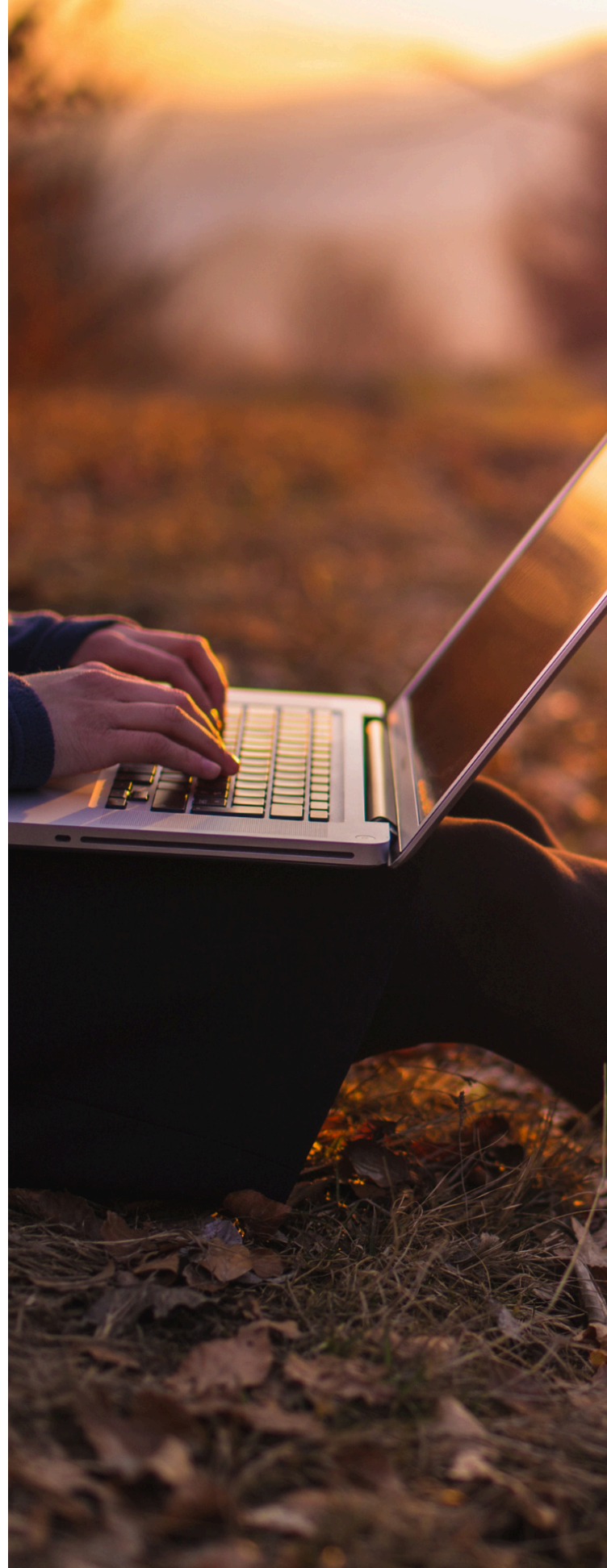
Completed **low-level engineering designs** to help local internet providers to build networks in underserved communities in Jenner, Walsh Landing, South East Santa Rosa, and East Cloverdale.



Allocated \$2.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to support **engineering designs for broadband networks in rural and unserved communities** in Sonoma County. This funding will also be used as local match for applications to the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, through which California has \$1.9 billion to invest in broadband infrastructure.



Through participation in the **North Bay/North Coast Broadband Consortium**, a partnership between Sonoma, Marin, Napa, and Mendocino Counties, we have engaged a consultant to conduct a **Fixed Wireless Infrastructure Analysis**. This study will help determine where in our region wireline broadband deployment is not geographically or economically feasible and provide plans for a high-speed wireless alternative.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

BROADBAND ACCESS

Digital Needs Assessment

The EDC contracted with Los Cien Sonoma County to conduct a **Digital Needs Assessment**. 579 responses were collected over one month through in-person outreach. Of those 579 respondents, 63% make below 50 percent of the county's area median income of \$48,450. 80% of respondents reported having some form of access to internet, however, many of those respondents also reported paying high costs, having low speeds, and limited access to computer devices.

- 80% of respondents living in low-income households are **paying more than \$30/month on internet**, despite being eligible for low-income internet plans.
- **60% are receiving service speeds below State/Federal standards** (100/20 MBPS) and yet majority (66%) are paying at least \$50/month.
- **44% reported having no devices or only a smartphone**. That figure increases to 53% when isolating for households with school-aged children.

The Digital Needs Assessment helps inform broadband access initiatives. Full report is available at SonomaEDC.org/broadband.

Additional Highlights



Allocated **\$200,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to a Free Internet Program** in partnership with Comcast, Burbank Housing, and MidPen Housing. This program will provide **free internet for one year to 556 households** in select affordable housing sites across the county.



Received \$21,000 in Digital Equity funding from the California Emerging Technology Fund for participation in a Digital Equity Best Practices Grant. Through this grant, EDC participates in a statewide convening of local jurisdictions working to close the digital divide. **This funding will support EDC digital equity initiatives** including the distribution of devices to families with school aged children and the development of a public facing Broadband GIS Hub.





Dr. Marlene Orozco speaking on a climate panel for 2025 Economic Perspective.

EVENTS

Economic Perspective

EDC hosted two signature Economic Perspectives events at Sonoma State University. These events strive to look through different lenses in our community to examine the critical elements for a healthy and vibrant economy. Each event saw over 100 attendees.

2024 Fall Economic Perspective featured Dr. Jerry Nickelsburg with a special post general election economic analysis. January's 2025 Economic Perspective turned its attention to climate opportunities and challenges featuring Dr. Merlin Hanauer and a panel include Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, Dr. Marlene Orozco, Dr. Roxanne Ezzet, and Joel Laucher.



Dr. Jerry Nickelsburg 2024 Fall Economic Perspective.



Dr. Merlin Hanauer, 2025 Economic Perspective.

EVENTS

Food Focused Events

BLACK COD WEEK



From October 18-27, 2024, the EDC, in partnership with Sonoma County Tourism, Fifth Supervisor District Office of Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, and Chef Dustin Valette, hosted Sonoma County's first ever **Black Cod Week**.

The prohibition of commercial fishing of Chinook Salmon and the limited fishing season for Dungeness Crab, has significantly impacted the local fishing community. Black Cod Week's goal was to increase demand of Black Cod, a fish that is abundant off the Sonoma Coast, not as environmentally impacted as shallow water fish, and delicious across cuisines.

Highlights

- 52 restaurants, markets, and tasting rooms offered Black Cod on their menus or for sale for the home cook.
- Over 5,000 pounds of reported Black Cod sold during the event.

SONOMA COUNTY RESTAURANT WEEK



Sonoma County celebrated its **16th annual Restaurant Week** from February 24 through March 2, 2025. The week long event features restaurants and eateries across the county, all offering a special prix fixe multi-course meal or a sweet perk.

Sonoma County Restaurant Week's goal is to elevate Sonoma County food during a slower time of year, and invite new and returning diners.

Highlights

- \$1.22 million economic impact
- 127 participating restaurants and eateries.
- 67,000 estimated Restaurant Week diners.

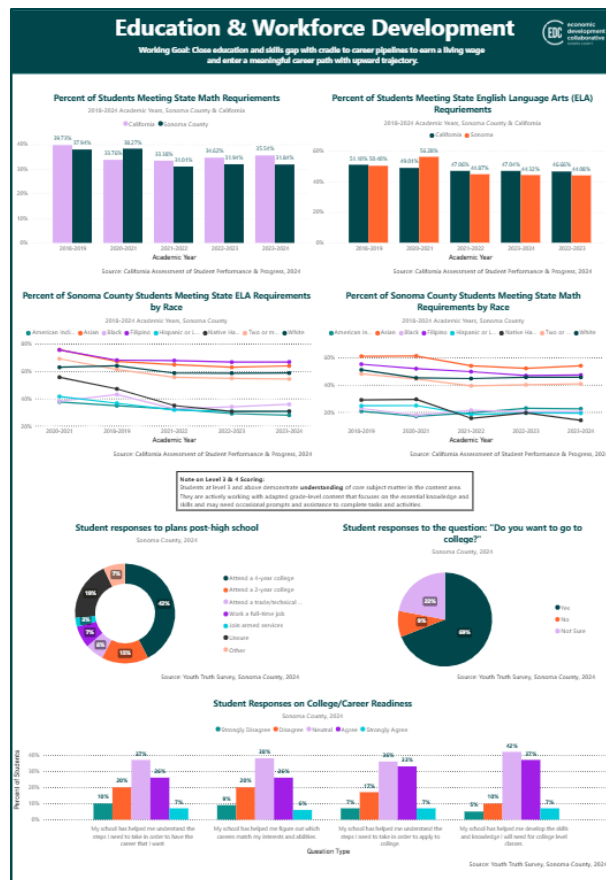
RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Economic Research

EDC produced **over 20 economic reports** in the last year ranging from industry insights to workforce trends. Many these reports are now available in an interactive online format, making it easier to dive into the data. Reports include:

- Sonoma County Indicators
- Job Market Tracker
- City Snapshots
- TOT Quarterly Report

View all reports at
SonomaEDC.org/data-center.



New interactive report format.

HIGHLIGHTS

Inclusive economic development is centered around three key domains: Job & Business, Housing & Community, and Education & Workforce. EDC tracks these domains through a variety of metrics to help celebrate success and map opportunities. Here are just a few:

95% 

of Sonoma County businesses have less than 50 employees.

66% 

of Sonoma County's workforce live and work in Sonoma County.

57% 

of Sonoma County high school students plan to attend college after graduation.



**economic
development
collaborative**
SONOMA COUNTY

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