



Special Projects & Research July 2025

TEAM MEMBERS

Trevor Bagan, Economic Research & Workforce Initiatives Fellow
Aleena Decker, Grants Analyst
Brad Johnson, Special Projects Analyst
Jack Kampmann, Interim Special Projects Administrative Coordinator
Ailish McGiffin, Tourism & Marketing Fellow
Christine Palmer, Business Insights & Research Program Manager
Katherine DiPasqua, Director

ADMINISTRATION

Recruitments

- On July 1, 2025, we opened recruitment for an Extra Help Special Projects Administrative Coordinator position. This position will be split 50/50 between support for the EDC's Broadband program and assisting the Town of Windsor's Economic Development Department with implementation of their Strategic Plan.
- On July 8, 2025, our two new Fellows started! Please welcome Trevor Bagan, Economic Research and Workforce Initiatives Fellow, and Ailish McGiffin, Tourism and Marketing Fellow, to the team!

EVENTS & COMMUNICATIONS

New Contracts for Event Coordination and Social Media Management

With the promotion of Aleena Decker to Grants Analyst, EDC will be piloting contracting out events and communication management functions in Fiscal Year 2025-26. In June 2025, we conducted an informal solicitation and will be entering into the following agreements beginning August 1st 2025. We will be working with the team immediately to start planning for the Fall Economic Perspective Event.

1. JGW Events (Judy Walker) – Event Coordination & Event Advertising
2. Los Cien (Magali Telles) – Event Advisory Services
3. Bay Area Digital Solutions – Social Media Management

GRANTS

Local Immigrant Integration and Inclusion Grant (LIIG)

- The Local Immigration Integration & Inclusion Grant (LIIG) from GO Biz just completed its third quarter with one more quarter to go. At the end of the final quarter, the subgrantee, Secure Families Collaborative, will produce the County with a gap analysis of immigrant services in Sonoma County. Additionally, through a partnership between Secure Families Collaborative and 211 United Way of the Wine County, existing immigrant resources will be added to the 211 website.
- For the gap analysis, Secure Families Collaborative and 211 United Way have collected 805 individual survey responses from immigrant members of the Sonoma County community. Out of the 805 respondents, 677 selected Mexico as their country of origin. The second largest was Haiti with 43 respondents.
- 33 organizational surveys have been collected from nonprofits and government entities throughout the county. The information from this survey will be used to update and add immigrant services to 211's website.

BROADBAND

Free Internet Program

On March 11, 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved the implementation of a Time Limited Internet Subsidy Program. The program will provide free internet for one year to 556 residents of select affordable housing properties throughout the County. The EDC has partnered with Burbank Housing, MidPen Housing, and Xfinity to offer internet at speeds of 100 MBPS download and 20 MBPS upload at no cost to the participating residents. Also, through a contribution from Xfinity and grant funding from the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), the County will be distributing Dell laptops to participating households with school aged children living in the home. Outreach at all the participating locations began in June 2025 and EDC staff hope to distribute all 556 subscriptions by December 2025.

Low Income Internet Program Outreach

The EDC's Digital Needs Assessment revealed that many of our low-income residents are not aware that they qualify for lower cost internet plans. As such, we will be working with Human Services Department to conduct direct household notifications with information about lower cost internet offerings to the over 70,000 Medi-Cal and CalFresh enrollees in the County. This work is funded through a grant from CETF that has already been awarded.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ag Tech

Staff will be sitting on a statewide ag-tech strategy committee aimed at addressing regulatory barriers to the sector's growth. The committee meets monthly and is hosted by Go Biz. Its formation stemmed from the CA Statewide Economic Blueprint identifying ag-tech as a sector worth accelerating. Brad Johnson is

representing the Bay Area Jobs First Collaborative on the committee, and working with local stakeholders on identifying areas for reasonable regulatory relief that Go Biz can address.

The EDC is continuing to work with Sonoma County Wine Growers, the Santa Rosa Junior College, and [Reservoir Farms](#) to develop an ag tech innovation incubator facility in Sonoma County. We are envisioning the space starting at the Winegrower's facility with future expansion or relocation to Shone Farm. Reservoir Farms will model their incubator projects in Salinas and Merced Counties, SRJC will be working as a workforce development partner, the Wine Growers have a direct connection to growers for facilitating technological needs, and the EDC will provide business expansion and assistance to the startups in the facility. The EDC is partnering in various ways during the incubators development phase such as providing research and connecting partners to the project.

City Engagement and Collaboration

The EDC is hosting quarterly economic development partner meetings with our City colleagues. Historically, these meetings have been exclusively information sharing. However, there was an intentional shift at the last meeting for the partners to be an action-oriented work group that will work on projects or issues that have county-wide impacts, such as SSU's hardships, United Soccer League, or other projects. Our next meeting is on August 21, 2025, where we will map out the specific projects and scopes the partners will work on for the next year.

Evolution of SMEDD

We are assessing alternative structures to work with our partners in Mendocino County on regional economic development projects. One model that is being considered is replicating the action-oriented Sonoma County economic development partner meetings on a Sonoma Mendocino regional scale.

RESEARCH

2025 Sonoma County Business Owner Survey and Report

- This month, the EDC launched a survey to solicit feedback from Sonoma County business owners. This survey will provide information on the demographics, industry distribution, challenges, and economic contributions of Sonoma County businesses.
- The survey and subsequent report will enable the EDC to better support Sonoma County entrepreneurs and foster inclusive economic growth.
- The EDC is currently working with our partner organizations to promote the survey on websites, newsletters, and social media channels. It is available in English, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, and Vietnamese.



The graphic is a promotional flyer for the Sonoma County Business Owners Survey. It features the EDC logo at the top left. The main text reads: "Sonoma County Business Owners: We Want to Hear From You". Below this, it says: "Share your experiences and receive a \$10 gift card for your time. Supplies are limited." A central question asks: "Are you a business owner, entrepreneur, or self-employed in Sonoma County?" followed by "Help shape future support for businesses like yours by completing a short survey (6-8 minutes)". There is a QR code and a yellow button that says "Take Survey Here" with the text "or scan the QR code" below it. At the bottom, it lists the languages: "English • Español • Tiếng Việt • 简体中文 (Simplified Chinese)". On the right side of the graphic is a photo of a smiling man in a white shirt and blue apron holding a large blue sign that says "OPEN".

*This includes businesses based in or primarily serving cities such as Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Windsor, Healdsburg, Sonoma, Cloverdale, Sebastopol, Cotati, and nearby unincorporated areas like Guerneville, Glen Ellen, or Bodega Bay. Must be 18+.

Your responses are confidential. For questions contact Dr. Marlene Orozco: marlene@stratifiedinsights.com

Please encourage your business networks to complete the survey through July. The goal is to obtain 1,000 business owner responses. The survey can be found here:

https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3jANmEWz4g1wfYy

Expanded Research Program

- On January 28, 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved a contract with Bay Area Council Economic Institute (BACEI), a local research institute, and the creation of a department-funded pilot program to evaluate the economic impacts of up to three significant items coming before the Board in 2025. EDC staff coordinated with the County Executive and Department Heads to identify the following significant items for the pilot: Permit Sonoma's General Plan Update in August 2025 and Regional Parks' Marinas Update in September 2025.
- EDC staff are working with BACEI and the departments to pull relevant data for the analysis and review draft materials. The final economic impact analyses will be included as attachments to the board items as informational so that the Board and public can see the economic considerations and impacts for each item.

Reports

- Redesigned and published the Sonoma County Indicators and Job Market Tracker dashboards to better align with the EDB 3.0 Plan.
- Conducted data collection and analysis for the Levi's Gran Fondo Cycling Road Race economic impact report, utilizing REMI PI+, the EDC's new economic modeling and forecasting tool. This report was produced in collaboration with Bike Monkey and the Town of Windsor.
- Produced and published two new industry reports – *Moody's Climate, Green Energy, and Sustainability Report* and our latest *Quarterly Outlook*, which provide readers with up-to-date information on how shifting federal policies are impacting local industry.
- Fulfilled data requests from organizations including Sutter Health, The Press Democrat, North Bay Business Journal, the Human Services Department (HSD), and Pep Housing, providing insights ranging from demographic analysis and industry trends to long-term forecasting.