



# Uplift

## Central Coast

Regional Plan Part II Executive Summary

California Jobs First

SEPTEMBER 2024

# Who Is Uplift Central Coast?

Residents across the region have united to form Uplift Central Coast, a dynamic coalition driving meaningful community dialogue and collaboratively shaping a vision for sustainable, equitable economic opportunities in the region.

**Building on Uplift’s comprehensive research and community engagement report released in January, Uplift developed this new strategic framework to inspire actions to create quality job opportunities, improve workforce skills, and address specific regional economic challenges to help our communities not only survive, but thrive.**

Uplift is convened by three economic development agencies: REACH, Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), and Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP). Regions are represented by community-driven committees composed of residents from different backgrounds.



# What Is California Jobs First?

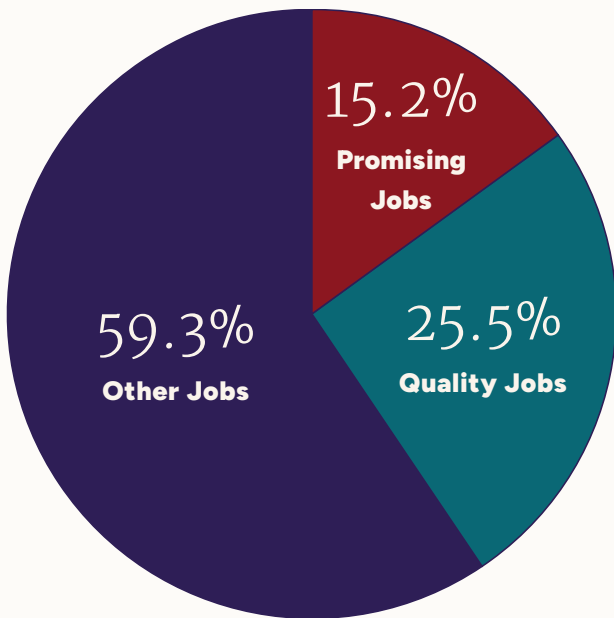
California Jobs First is a state-level program designed to analyze and respond to the specific needs, characteristics, and competitive advantages of each region. This program ensures that economic and job creation strategies are informed by community experiences and geared to accelerate a carbon-neutral economy that meets the unique needs, strengths, and aspirations of each community. California Jobs First draws funding into each region to seed and implement the strategies the region’s residents have prioritized.

# Foundational Research Findings

The Central Coast is marked by wide socio-economic disparities, with over 1 million residents, or 45 percent, struggling to make ends meet, meaning their incomes do not cover basic costs of living.

Only 25 percent of the region’s jobs qualify as “quality jobs,” with an additional 15 percent of jobs qualifying as “promising jobs,” meaning they lead to a quality job within a decade. High housing costs, expensive child care, and long commutes further diminish the quality of life and reduce wage value within the region. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents and those with lower forms of traditional education are disproportionately underrepresented in holding quality or promising jobs.

Share of Quality and Promising Jobs



## How Uplift defines “Quality Job”

- Pays an **annualized living wage** (established by analysis of regional costs and modeling of income required to improve self-sufficiency) that allows families to make ends meet while accumulating long-term and emergency savings.
- Offers **employer-sponsored health insurance** (a proxy for other worker benefits)
- Provides **worker stability** in terms of retaining or leading to another quality job in the future.
- From community members, Uplift heard that a quality job is also one that compensates workers enough to pay bills and save/invest some, provides adequate healthcare coverage, offers flexibility to take paid time off (sick leave and vacation), is free from discrimination, provides learning and growth opportunities, contributes meaningfully to the community, and is physically and psychologically safe.

## How Uplift defines a “Promising Job”

- Promising jobs lead to a quality job within a decade.

Jobs that do not meet this definition are often still highly valued and important roles that significantly contribute to the community.

The chances of holding a quality or promising job vary significantly by industry; for instance, only 6.4 percent of hospitality jobs count as a quality job versus 28.7 percent of manufacturing jobs. Job quality also varies significantly within industries; for example, 72.5 percent of healthcare diagnosing or treating practitioners hold a quality job, compared to 3.9 percent of nursing assistants. This means that both job creation and workforce preparedness efforts need to be carefully targeted.

### Share of Quality and Promising Jobs in Regional Industries



# Assets to Build On

While acknowledging its challenges, the Central Coast boasts many distinctive assets that can be focused, leveraged, and built on as catalysts spurring more inclusive economic growth for and with communities that call the region home.

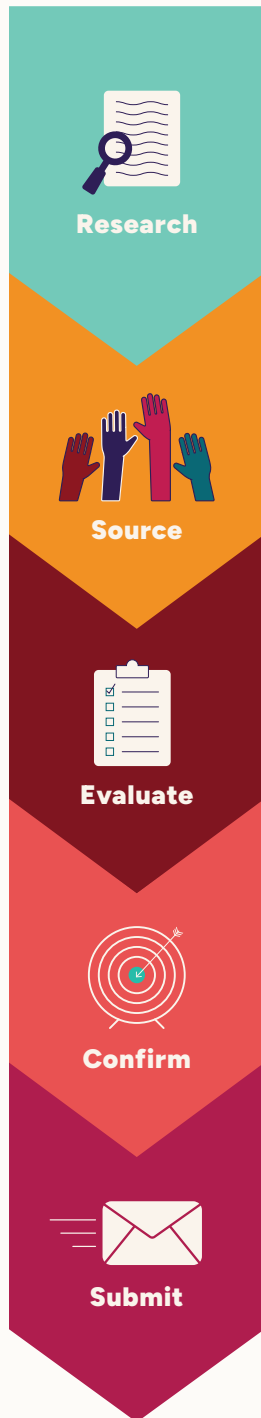
These assets include the beauty of landscapes and open spaces from the ocean to the mountains alongside several opportunity industries with strong market growth potential. They involve increasingly diverse residents, cultures, and communities who also comprise a workforce with a high degree of transferable knowledge and skills required for quality jobs across key sectors, and a talent pipeline from world-class educational institutions. They also include exceptional innovation from public and private institutions whose translation research and development work outpaces peer regions, with especially high-impact strengths in engineering, physics, information technology, and biotech closely connected with and supporting regional firms that can create quality jobs.

**Altogether, these assets support dynamic, market-leading business activity creating accessible quality jobs, emblematic of California’s innovation economy and future.** This includes high-value products and services across a range of industries that share common characteristics in the activities, talent, innovation, and infrastructure that drive their success: advanced air mobility technologies development, testing, and production; microelectronics, semiconductor, and quantum computing supply chain, agricultural technology engineering and software; commercial space launch and operations; and biotech manufacturing.



# Uplift's Approach to Strategy Development

Uplift collected and reviewed an extensive set of research, data, and community inputs to develop the strategies included in Regional Plan Part II.



**Research:** From May through December 2023, Uplift conducted extensive research and community engagement to better understand the Central Coast's economy, including its strengths, threats, opportunities, and weaknesses. Uplift published these findings in the *Regional Plan Part I* and an accompanying online *Databook*.

**Source:** From January through May 2024, Uplift requested input from the community and industry leaders on strategies, yielding 100+ unique ideas to consider. Strategy ideas emerged during Listening Sessions, Roundtables, Industry Leader Interviews, the Strategy Lab (a facilitated strategy development workshop for Uplift Vision and Steering Committee Members), and public Community Meetings. Throughout 2023 and 2024 Uplift conducted over 95 Listening Sessions in partnership with local Community Based Organizations (CBOs), 13 industry Roundtables, 72 interviews, and multiple public community update meetings across the region, engaging over 4,140 community members.

**Evaluate:** From June through July, Uplift systematically evaluated each strategy idea based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with the scope of California Jobs First
- Alignment with data findings and community engagement themes
- Alignment with Uplift's North Star and vision
- Reasonably feasible to implement

**Confirm:** In August, after completing the first draft of the Regional Plan Part II, Uplift sent the document to the Vision and Steering Committees, select members of the Research Committee, and industry leaders across the region to provide feedback and input. After feedback was integrated and content bolstered through input, the Uplift Steering Committee adopted the Regional Plan Part II.

**Submit:** Uplift submitted the Regional Plan Part II to the State of California by the due date, August 31, 2024.

While Uplift believes in the potential for each of its strategies to produce lasting change, it also views the Regional Plan Part II as a dynamic and continuously evolving document, subject to further refinement and shifts to optimally support the current and future needs and aspirations of the region's residents.

# Strategies

## Introduction

Uplift’s strategies are organized by target sector, economic mobility, climate resilience through economic and workforce, and community development strategies to increase the presence of quality of jobs and enhance the quality of life for current and future residents of California’s Central Coast.



## Target Sector Strategies

Uplift identified a combination of opportunity industries positioned to deliver quality job creation accessible to those with less than a four-year degree, based on analysis weighing regional competitiveness, concentration, innovation assets, talent base, and other factors.

These sectors represent parts of the value chain for “autonomous systems,” with specializations that support industries ranging from advanced air mobility, aerospace, and AgTech equipment innovations to quantum computing, microelectronics, and biotechnology. The common industry capabilities that enable these activities are:

- Precision Manufacturing
- Advanced Business Services, particularly software and computer systems design

Other sectors in this section are centered on enhancing the quality of existing jobs in some of the region’s largest industries (which concentrate lower numbers of such opportunities) and improving pathways to better jobs that are currently available. These sectors are:

- Healthcare
- Agriculture
- Hospitality and Tourism

## Economic Mobility Strategies

While some strategies are tailored for specific sectors, the strategies in this section are not specific to any one sector. Instead, they have applications across multiple sectors. Topics within this category include:

- Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Small Business Development
- Training, Upskilling, and Learning and Development
- Child Care

## Climate Resilience through Economic and Workforce Strategies: Meeting the Moment of California’s Climate Leadership

Climate change is a growing risk factor for economic development on the Central Coast, with broad effects on the reliability of core assets, productivity, investment, and quality of life. The Central Coast is navigating the transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources, which may impact the local employment and economic dynamics. As the region prepares for a more sustainable future, prioritizing quality jobs that advance climate resilience and nature preservation will be crucial in ensuring long-term environmental and economic stability.

## Community Development Strategies

There are several topics beyond the scope of the California Jobs First focus on creating quality jobs and improving access to them, but foundational to a thriving, resilient community and quality of life for Central Coast residents. Topics within this category include:

- Housing
- TK-12 and Higher Education
- Transportation
- Immigration
- Arts and Culture
- Nonprofit





# Target Sector Strategies

# Boosting Quality Jobs Creation

**Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services (encompassing specializations such as Aerospace, Advanced Air Mobility, Agricultural Technology, Microelectronics, Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals, and Blue Technology)**

## 1. Accelerate Sub-Baccalaureate Workforce

**Pipeline Development:** Build a stronger pipeline of manufacturing and business services talent for quality jobs available to workers with less than a bachelor's degree, improving access to family-sustaining employment and addressing employers' primary barrier to growth in a range of sub-industries. This strategy involves collaboration between employers, economic development intermediaries, workforce and education leads, community organizations, and potentially others.

## 2. Bolster the Region's Long-Term Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)

**Pipeline:** Advance a more diverse and equitable pipeline of engineering, technology, and other key STEM talent, filling gaps in roles requiring higher levels of traditional education, and positioning local talent for highly paid professional positions. Implementing this strategy could primarily involve education, workforce, and community leads in program delivery, in partnership with employers and economic development intermediaries.

## 3. Enhance the Capacity of the Region's Talent

**Ecosystem to Serve Priority Sectors:** Build greater sub-regional capacity for industry, workforce, education, community, and other leaders to collectively address near-term and long-term talent needs. This strategy responds to existing fragmentation and capacity gaps among both employers and providers that limit collective responses.

## 4. Unlock the Full Potential of the Region's

**Innovation Assets:** Reduce barriers to tech transfer and commercialization of landmark university and federal installation-generated innovation across the Central Coast. Implementing this strategy could involve educational institutions, federal installations, economic development intermediaries, and entrepreneurs.

## 5. Increase Supports for High-Growth

**Entrepreneurship:** Bolster the ecosystem of entrepreneurial supports to promote firm and scale-up in priority sector-related applications. Implementing this strategy could primarily involve economic development/entrepreneurship intermediaries and entrepreneurs.

## 6. Enhance Core and Sector-Relevant Infrastructure:

Fill gaps in specialized and basic facilities and infrastructure required for growth of precision manufacturing, advanced business services, and specific sub-industry applications. Implementing this strategy could involve economic development/entrepreneurship intermediaries; firms and entrepreneurs; universities, community colleges, and other innovation institutions; local officials with land use authority; and utilities, among others.

## 7. Ensure the Sustainability of Small and Middle Market Firms in Target Sectors:

Promote the long-term success of the region's precision manufacturing employment base by improving the productivity of local small and mid-sized firms facing competitive pressures. Implementing this strategy could involve economic development intermediaries and firms.

# Enhancing Job Quality in Prominent Sectors

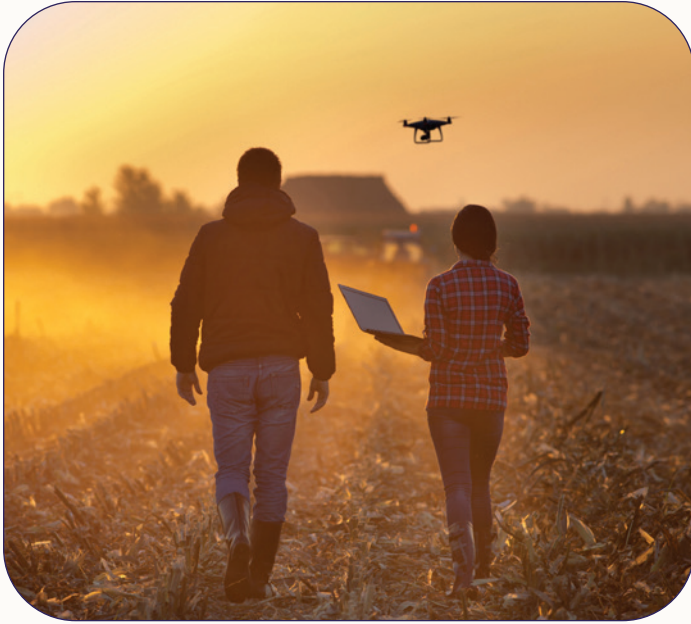
## Healthcare

- 1. Expand Pathways Into Quality Jobs for Lower Paid Healthcare Occupations:** Create and scale training programs that enable community members in lower paid healthcare positions to progress into higher quality jobs such as nurses, physical therapists, and physician assistants (please note that this is not an exhaustive list). There is a shortage of skilled professionals needed to meet the increasing demand for healthcare services within the region, so expanding pathways may support individuals moving into quality jobs as well as the broader community who can then benefit from their services.
- 2. Bolster Workforce Pipeline Between Educational Institutions and Healthcare Institutions:** Establishing a comprehensive pipeline between educational institutions and healthcare institutions to offer externships and career path training may help professionals secure more quality healthcare jobs. The Central Coast healthcare sector requires a steady influx of skilled professionals to meet growing demands. By creating partnerships among schools, colleges, universities, and healthcare providers, students can be provided with hands-on experience and a clear understanding of the various career opportunities within the healthcare sector, thus supporting the creation of a well-prepared and resilient future workforce.
- 3. Expand Training and Awareness on Healthcare Career Paths:** Provide elementary, middle, and high school students with training, resources, and education on healthcare careers, pathways, and their requirements. The Central Coast healthcare sector faces challenges in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. Raising awareness and interest in healthcare careers from a young age can help build a future workforce ready to meet the region's healthcare needs.



“Many healthcare jobs require degrees past a bachelors. Based on the cost of college, it’s immediately a no-go for many families. You might as well go to the moon.”

Healthcare Roundtable hosted by Uplift virtually

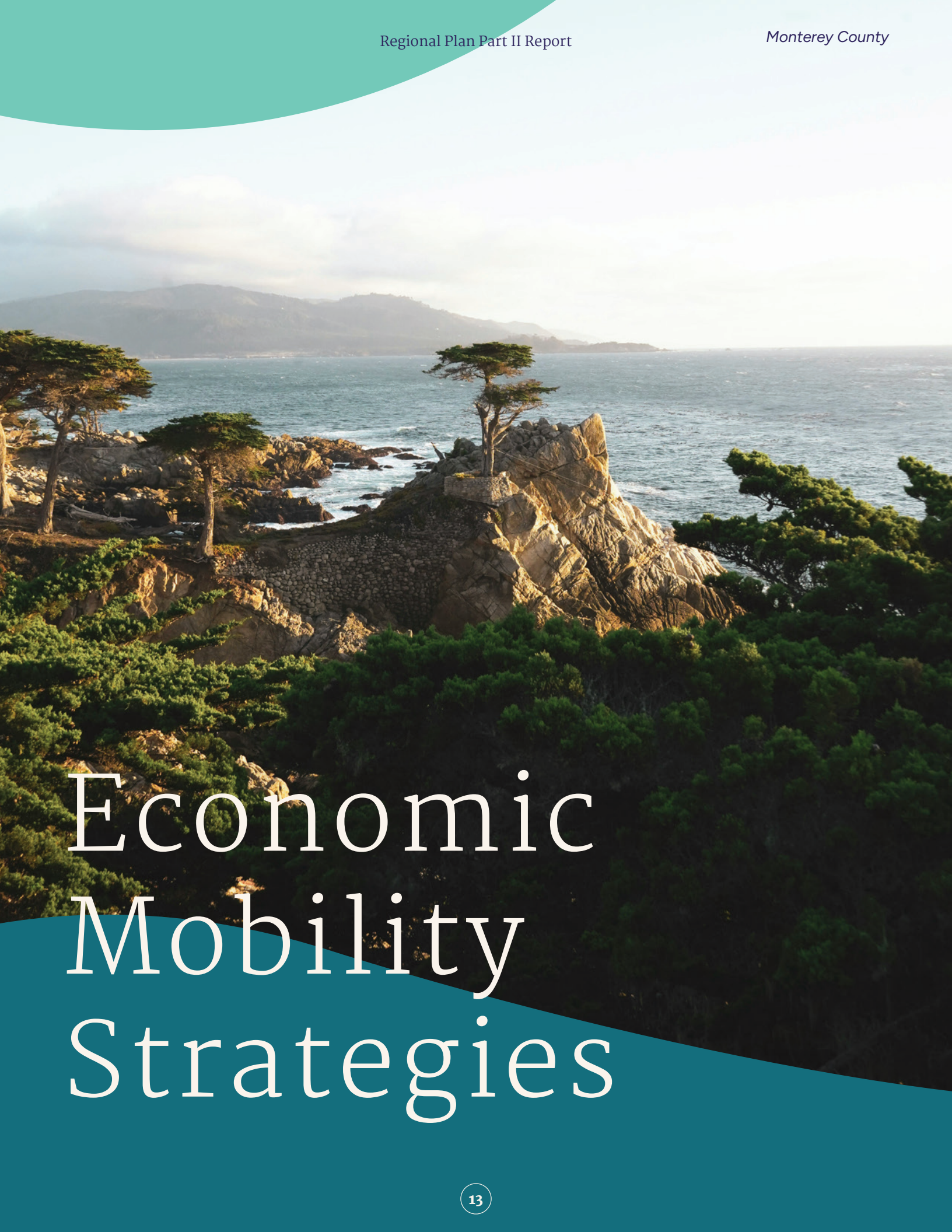


## Agriculture

- 1. Create an AgTech and Regenerative Agriculture Ready Workforce:** As the agriculture sector evolves with increasing automation and technological integration, creating an AgTech and regenerative agriculture ready workforce will help current and future workers transition, thereby maintaining productivity and equitably mitigating potential job displacement.
- 2. Strengthen AgTech Commercialization, Innovation, and Research Initiatives:** Establish or strengthen partnerships between universities, farms, and agricultural businesses on the Central Coast to create AgTech, sustainability, and climate resilience innovation hubs. These hubs will focus on research, innovation, and the commercialization of new technologies, ensuring that advancements in farming practices are effectively brought to market. Tailored to the region's unique climate and agricultural needs, this initiative will drive innovation by fostering collaboration between researchers and industry leaders, developing cutting-edge solutions that enhance both agricultural sustainability and economic resilience. By accelerating the transition of innovative research into practical, scalable technologies, this initiative supports the California Climate Adaptation Strategy, providing the necessary tools for sustainable growth and ensuring the long-term viability and resilience of California's agricultural lands.

## Hospitality and Tourism

Efforts in this sector include **creating management pathways, enhancing upskilling opportunities for the current workforce, and developing robust apprenticeship programs**, which are highlighted in the Training, Upskilling, and Learning and Development section of Regional Plan Part II. As highlighted in the Housing section, housing costs have surged on the Central Coast. **Offering employer sponsored housing** is another way to increase the quality of hospitality and tourism jobs by making it less difficult for workers to find affordable accommodations.



# Economic Mobility Strategies



## Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Small Business Development

- 1. Expand Culturally Responsive Community-Focused Small Business Technical Assistance:** Bolster the scale of support services specifically targeted to entrepreneurs who are women and/or Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). Implementing this strategy could involve community-based organizations and other entrepreneurship support providers.
- 2. Bolster Small Business Financial Capacity and Access to Capital:** Improve access to critical resources for starting and scaling enterprises for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs. Implementing this strategy could involve community-based organizations and other entrepreneurship support providers.
- 3. Promote Collaborative Models of Local, Broad-Based Ownership:** Accelerate adoption of community wealth-building models (such as cooperatives) with potential to ensure business continuity, promote local wealth retention, improve job quality, and secure living wages for employees advancing to higher positions. Implementing this strategy could involve community-based organizations, other entrepreneurship support providers, regional firms, and anchor institutions.
- 4. Support Community Kitchens and Regional Food Hubs:** By investing in community kitchens, community members can experience reduced financial burdens and gain access to a more cost-effective and lower-risk option for business ownership. Supporting Regional Food Hubs can enhance market access for farmers, expand food access, generate new jobs, and create a more environmentally sustainable food system. Regional food hubs can empower local farmers by providing them with direct market access, leading to better pricing, reduced transportation costs, and fresher produce offerings.

# Training, Upskilling, and Learning and Development

## 1. Expand On the Job Training and Upskilling:

Training, certifications, and upskilling can be expanded and increased to help incumbent workers move into quality or promising jobs from other jobs. Elevating the skill level of existing employees can help them move into high-paying and more skilled positions across a range of industries, such as healthcare, agriculture, hospitality, and child care. Upskilling incumbent workers promotes equitable job access by providing opportunities for career advancement and skill building, while simultaneously enhancing economic resilience by cultivating a skilled workforce capable of adapting to industry shifts and economic challenges. The intent of this strategy is for trainees to move into a higher paying position, participate through multiple “on and off ramps” and innovative scheduling practices, and obtain industry-valued credentials throughout the training process.

## 2. Enhance Training and Apprenticeship Programs:

To provide more options for the region’s youth and unemployed residents, particularly in disinvested communities, training and apprenticeship programs can be enhanced or developed. Many young people across the Central Coast feel they have limited employment opportunities, especially if they do not pursue higher education, which is often costly. These programs should focus on creating accessible, engaging, and job-market relevant opportunities and can be tailored to meet the immediate and future demands of the workforce.

## 3. Promote Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Upskilling Programs:

To mitigate language barriers and foster collaboration among the region’s multilingual workforce, Uplift recommends employer-provided or sponsored language education. This initiative would enable monolingual English speakers to learn other primary languages spoken in the region (e.g., Spanish, Mixteco) and non-English speakers to learn English during standard working hours.

## 4. Scale Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Programs:

To empower individuals to develop a plan to achieve living wage employment and gain economic self-sufficiency, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara offers a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, in line with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)’s FSS program. Scaling such programs across the region can equip families with the information and resources required to achieve and maintain financial self-sufficiency—a foundation for economic growth and resilience.



# Child Care

- 1. Expand Child Care Workforce:** The Central Coast needs more people who are well compensated for the child care that they provide. Increasing the region's base of child care providers could help make the child care system, and therefore the economy, more resilient. Apprenticeship programs could be scaled to train a more robust child care and early childhood education workforce. Expanding the child care workforce can create more job opportunities, especially for women, immigrants, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This approach not only meets a critical community need but also equitably increases access to employment, benefiting both the regional economy and its residents.
- 2. Enhance Child Care Infrastructure:** Meeting the child care needs of Central Coast residents requires more space for child care to occur, whether that be in a center or a home. However, the cost of building, leasing, and permitting is prohibitively high, the permitting process can take a long time, and building code compliance can be difficult. Barriers for establishing a home-based child care are high as well. Additionally, without physical space for child care to occur, government funding for affordable child care cannot be fully used. Providing discounted child care fails to aid families when there are too few available spots or when it is completely unavailable. Tactics such as awarding grants for child care business startups, waiving development fees, housing construction or retrofits, and other buildings that incorporate or support dedicated spaces for child care may facilitate development. Partnering with faith-based organizations and making the most of under-utilizing spaces may be another option to find additional locations for child care.
- 3. Encourage Employer Supported Child Care:** Uplift encourages programs for employers to provide optional child care for employees through on-site or near-site child care, employer collaboratives, stipends (e.g., cash assistance), employer subsidies, employer contributions to flexible dependent care spending accounts, or first right of access to increase the feasibility of caregivers of young children participating in the workforce, therefore advancing economic diversification and resilience. Furthermore, employers may expand family-friendly business practices such as robust paid family leave, virtual work, welcoming infants-at-work, flexible scheduling, and accommodations that could reduce burdens to families and the whole child care system.
- 4. Improve Usability of Centralized Resources to Navigate the Child Care System:** Even with Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies in each county, the very limited child care on the Central Coast is difficult to navigate. Expanding resources and outreach for and enhancing usability of a consolidated place—which can have online and in-person resources—for information about child care options could help reduce this burden for the community. This effort could be supplemented with programs for outreach to disinvested communities to access culturally informed and affordable child care.



# Climate Resilience through Economic and Workforce Strategies:

Meeting the Moment of  
California's Climate Leadership

- 1. Advance the State's Clean Energy Goals and Promote Job Creation:** Position the Central Coast to advance California's clean energy goals and promote job creation by making the region ready for public and private investment in adoption of new clean energy technologies, leveraging the region's unique energy, research and development, infrastructure, and other assets.
- 2. Develop a Clean Energy Workforce:** Support the development of a robust clean economy workforce positioned to lead the region's push towards green energy solutions.
- 3. Drive Equitable Access to the Clean Economy:** Center equity in access to the clean energy economy, addressing the disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards on disinvested communities.
- 4. Protect and Conserve the Natural Environment:** Advance environmental protections to maintain the biodiversity of flora and fauna-based ecosystems, prevent human health risks, and preserve the Central Coast's reputation as a beautiful place to live, work, and visit.
- 5. Adapt to a Changing Climate:** Manage economic and environmental impacts on industries like agriculture which already experience the impacts of climate change and advance future economic development which is rooted in sustainability. Adaptation tactics aim to manage uncertainties caused by climate change, especially for vulnerable populations who are at particular risk for climate-related impacts





# Community Development Strategies

# Housing

## 1. Expand Employer Sponsored Housing:

Create partnerships between housing developers and employers to sponsor and build affordable housing for employees that employees may opt-into. Based on factors including risks, liability, budget, and need for employee housing, some employers may choose to retain ownership, some may prefer first right of availability, and some may prefer assisting with down payments. Employer sponsored housing could help to house employees more locally, decrease commute times and employee turnover, and increase employee satisfaction. For industries seeking new employees, employer sponsored housing may also increase the feasibility of workers accepting jobs in the Central Coast region—an area where housing is otherwise unreasonably expensive for many workers.

## 2. Promote Creative Housing Models:

Uplift encourages promoting less traditional solutions to meet the region’s housing needs. This may include repurposing underutilized land or office buildings, modifying ownership models, and advancing alternative designs. The scarcity of affordable housing in the Central Coast region leaves families with minimal choice other than finding makeshift housing solutions. Multiple families share small apartments, individual families share single rooms, and others are renting spaces not truly intended to be homes. To support current residents and welcome future residents, critical for maintaining and growing the regional economy, the Central Coast region needs additional housing. While Uplift acknowledges the importance of new sustainable development, particularly for residents with the lowest incomes, there is also an opportunity to use existing spaces more efficiently to provide more hospitable housing options.

“We asked what the current living situation was, whether they were able to rent an apartment by themselves or had to live in one room with their family. They initially almost all said they were renting a place by themselves, but then about half of them qualified that answer by saying the place they were renting was a back house, converted garage or other place not normally meant to live in, not an actual apartment. Someone said they paid \$1,500 a month for a converted garage.”

Listening Session hosted by Shelter Care Resources in Ventura County



## TK-12 & Higher Education

- 1. Strengthen Curriculum Aligned with the Regional and Future Economy:** Curricula designed to prepare students for equitable, sustainable economies of the future is present at varying degrees across the K-16 continuum and can be strengthened. While the basics of education remain consistent, tailoring offerings to equip students with building-block skills and key industry awareness will better situate them to contribute to critical functions for the economy, benefiting the community as well as the individuals in such quality jobs.
- 2. Prepare Disinvested Communities for Higher Education:** Offering multilingual higher education preparation classes for students and families from disinvested communities can help set graduates on a path to quality jobs, and help the community cultivate their skills and talents. Providing clear guidance on applying to trade schools and universities can empower first-generation students and their families to navigate the application process, access resources, and overcome the financial and administrative barriers to higher education.

## Transportation

- 1. Increase Public Transportation Infrastructure:** Increasing public transportation enhances sustainability and offers equitable access to employment, education, services, and recreation, especially for lower-income individuals and those from disinvested communities. Actions to increase public transportation can include increasing the frequency of existing bus routes, constructing new rail lines, and developing public-private partnerships that would sustainably supplement first-mile-last-mile trips.
- 2. Support Equitable Reduced or Free Fares for Public Transit:** The cost of living on the Central Coast is high, and the added expense of transportation presents additional financial challenges for many families. Programs can be developed or improved to offer reduced or free transit fares, creating a more equitable system. Fare structures can be adjusted based on income or specific factors like being a student, senior, or person with disabilities. Expanding access to transportation enables a more inclusive economy by allowing more people to reach job opportunities.

# Immigration

## 1. Establish an Immigrant Welcome Center:

Establishing a one-stop Immigrant Welcome Center can empower immigrants by providing easy access to essential services and information. This center can offer a centralized hub for multilingual resources such as legal assistance, housing information, healthcare referrals, social services coordination and job placement support.

## 2. Expand Financial Support and Education Program for Immigrants:

Providing microloans and financial literacy education can support and empower immigrants as they navigate financial systems in the pursuit of entrepreneurship. This strategy is rooted in advancing economic mobility and financial independence for the immigrant community.

## 3. Invest in Educational and Mentorship Program for Immigrants:

Investing in programs that educate immigrants about their rights as workers in the U.S. can empower immigrant workers and interrupt discriminatory work environments. Topics for programs to cover might include minimum wage laws, overtime rules, workplace safety regulations, and how to report violations.





## Arts and Culture

1. **Support Funding for the Arts:** Funding for the arts can encompass a variety of financial resources and initiatives aimed at strengthening art organizations and their activities. Resources can be allocated to assist art organizations in grant writing, helping them secure further funding from various sources. By providing these financial supports, organizations can foster a vibrant arts and culture scene on the Central Coast that can boost the region's economy, enhance the livability of the workforce, and promote community engagement and inclusivity.
2. **Revitalize Art and Culture:** Support efforts to revitalize arts and cultural venues and infrastructure, specifically those in disinvested communities. Projects to revitalize arts and cultural venues can enhance community engagement, attract visitors, stimulate the local economy, celebrate local heritage, and provide entertainment and educational opportunities.

“Even though we have this data, [that art is positively influencing the economy] there’s an ongoing disconnect between the reality that there’s a positive relationship. The arts are consistently under threat and left out of discussions on economic development and as a result, under-invested in.”

Interview with San Benito County Arts Council representative



## Nonprofit

- 1. Expand Diversity of Nonprofit Leaders and Boards:** Empower nonprofits to invest in addressing systemic barriers that have led to the lack of diversity in the nonprofit industry, including in its leadership and boards. To address the lack of diversity on boards, organizations must actively identify and dismantle systemic barriers, and create equitable practices that decenter whiteness as an unspoken or unintentional metric for successful board composition. Providing equitable access to nonprofit positions may include engaging in intentional programs dedicated to increasing diversity and representation.
- 2. Develop Grants Training:** Investing in grant application training for nonprofits can alleviate the challenges they face when applying for funding, thereby lowering barriers to entry and expanding access to funding opportunities.
- 3. Increase Capacity of Nonprofits:** To increase the capacity of nonprofits, consolidating and merging administrative functions if missions are aligned could be beneficial. Options to bolster the effectiveness and reach of nonprofit organizations could include providing centralized services in administration, human resources, and grant writing. These options can enhance the capacity and skills of nonprofit leaders and administrative professionals through increased access to executive management certifications and executive coaching programs tailored for leadership development.





# A Path Forward:

Institutionalizing Community-Led,  
Climate Forward Planning

The strategies described in this plan paint a picture of ways to Uplift the region's economy and create thriving, resilient communities for Central Coast residents.

Uplift's next steps include:

- 1. Continued Community Engagement:** Engaging a diverse group of community members to participate in strategy implementation.
- 2. Funding:** Funding is essential to catalyze these initiatives. Selected projects and initiatives that align with the strategies listed in this report and that meet the required California Jobs First criteria will be supported in the Catalyst Predevelopment Funding phase. Broad and sustained effort is needed to attract and secure additional future funding to support strategies and uplift disinvested communities for the long term.
- 3. Governance Structure:** Strategy implementation will have oversight and involvement from convening organizations, Uplift committees and community partners.
- 4. Creation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** KPIs will be developed for each project, an important measurement of progress, success, and impact within each strategy.



## Conclusion

The strategies outlined in this report provide a visionary and holistic community-informed roadmap for cultivating a resilient and prosperous Central Coast economy. By placing the needs of underserved and historically marginalized communities at the center of this plan, Uplift and our coalition of partners are setting a bold course towards a future where economic growth is shared, inclusive, and sustaining. This process and the resulting path forward has been directly informed, influenced, and illuminated by the collective vision, values, and aspirations of the Central Coast community. Uplift is unwavering in its commitment to a community-led and collaborative approach, ensuring that diverse voices contribute to shaping the region's future.

Uplift's research and strategy development processes illustrate the potential and opportunity that are ripe on the Central Coast. As the region embarks on this transformative journey, it sets an inspiring example for regions across the U.S., demonstrating that economic growth and opportunity rooted in equity and sustainability can create a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

# Stay in Touch

*We want to hear from you.* Your participation, ideas, and collaboration shape the future of the Central Coast. Reach out to connect with the project or get involved with convenors in your area.



**[reachcentralcoast.org](http://reachcentralcoast.org)**

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**[edcollaborative.com](http://edcollaborative.com)**

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