



Uplift

Central Coast

Regional Plan Part II Report

California Jobs First

Prepared for the State of California's Office of Business and Economic
Development (GO-Biz) and Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA)

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Preface

Letter from the Uplift Central Coast Coalition

DEAR PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

The Uplift Central Coast Coalition (Uplift) is proud to share strategies to fulfill a vision for a sustainable and equitable regional economy in support of recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies are the result of rigorous data analysis and extensive community input, including voices from disinvested communities and key industries on the Central Coast.

Uplift is a coalition spanning six counties (Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo (SLO), Santa Barbara, and Ventura) and is convened by REACH, the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), and Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP). Our coalition is powered by Central Coast residents united in a vision of a diverse, inclusive, equitable economy built by and for the region's residents. This work is part of an ongoing effort with California Jobs First, a program administered by the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). Under this initiative, we have the opportunity to bring funding into our region to invest in and implement strategies that will promote a diversified and innovative Central Coast, creating quality, sustainable jobs that offer higher wages and opportunities for advancement, uplifting families and communities to not only survive, but thrive.

The Central Coast of California boasts beautiful open spaces, burgeoning industries, incredible talent, growing diversity, and immense potential. Our region is home to world-class education and research institutions, a wide array of innovation, and a rich blend of cultures and communities. Despite these strengths, the Central Coast faces challenges in areas such as economic growth, quality job creation, educational attainment, and access and affordability to housing, child care, healthcare, and transportation. These disparities are ingrained in our regional economy, and our future success depends on our ability to grow equitably, inclusively, and sustainably.

In December 2023, Uplift submitted Regional Plan Part I to the State of California, capturing the complex realities and disparities that our community members face. From housing and child care to job quality and emerging industries, this plan synthesizes data from economic research and existing strategies, and extensive community engagement to inform an analysis of the current barriers and potential solutions to achieve stability and success for all residents. Regional Plan Part I describes the community-informed data analysis that serves as the underpinning of Uplift's economic strategy development.

Existing economic development approaches have been a key driver in creating opportunity and growth in our communities. As communities grow, inclusive economic development planning seeks to create a more sustainable and equitable economy by balancing economic

growth with social inclusion and environmental stewardship. Data shows that inclusive economies are stronger and more resilient, harnessing local potential and attracting talent and investment. Uplift is building upon long-standing economic development practices, while incorporating community-driven strategies to create a more equitable economy. **The heart of Uplift’s work exists within our North Star, at the center of economic opportunity, equity, and sustainability.** We integrate community voices, resident aspirations, and mission-driven elements through multilingual engagement and listening. We address unseen and unaddressed challenges and opportunities, building consensus around strategies for equitable, sustainable, and climate forward growth and investment to advance economic prosperity for underserved and historically underrepresented and excluded communities.

We recognize that economic development should not only generate wealth, but also promote well-being, social cohesion, and environmental resilience. Drawing on this, Uplift incorporates the perspectives of community members, the ambitions of residents, and key mission-oriented components. This includes establishing a locally-focused Research Committee, engaging in extensive multilingual outreach and listening, particularly within Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, and implementing a community led governance model (see Figure 1). An approach that strives to place our communities at the heart of shaping the region’s future. This process is different from many that have come before and is continually evolving as we learn what works, how to effectively meet the needs of our community, and the realities of our economic landscape.

Building on the learnings from the research phase, Uplift paired insights from the analysis with continued community input to identify specific and actionable ways to allocate resources to propel our mission and fulfill the vision of this community. Over the course of hundreds of meetings and thousands of hours of work, this report came together as a deeply collaborative effort. We are grateful for everyone who has contributed their time and talents to this endeavor. Uplift’s Vision, Steering, and Research Committee members and Community Based Organization (CBO) partners provided invaluable input, feedback, and collaboration that shaped the research, engagement, and the data narrative within this report and throughout the full project lifecycle. Lifting a new initiative off the ground and co-creating an equitable process can at times be uncomfortable and challenging, and their dedication and leadership has been instrumental in guiding this report, and our work at-large. Together, we are well on our way to uplifting the Central Coast.

To learn more about our work, hear the voices of our communities, and join our coalition, please visit UpliftCentralCoast.Org.

**In partnership and solidarity,
*Uplift Central Coast Coalition***



Establish inclusive governance structures and process to advance an effective, community-led approach



Leverage community voice, roundtables, data, leading practices, and curated engagement to prioritize sustainable and equitable economic development strategies

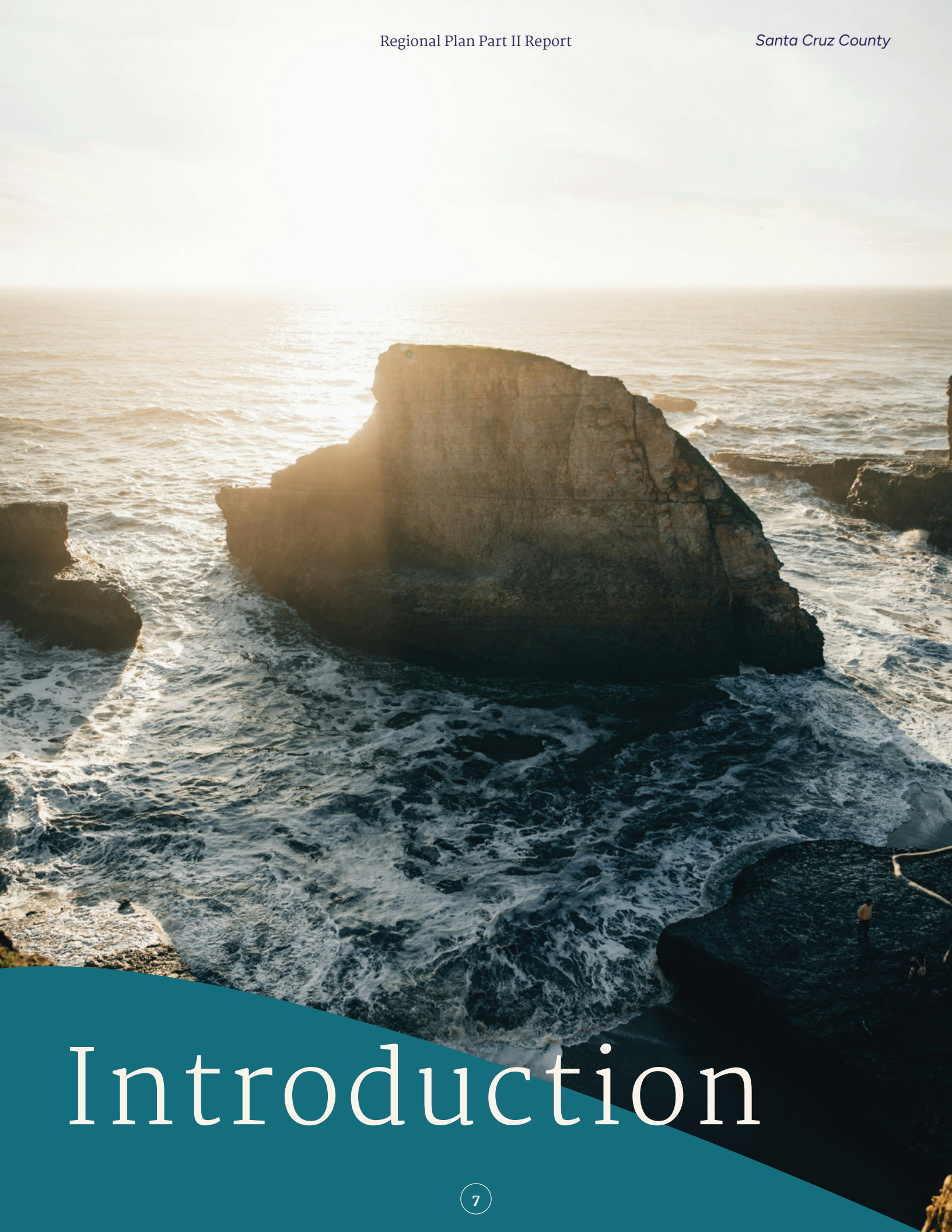
Finalize strategies, marking the culmination the economic development planning process and the start of the implementation phase

Allocate project pre-development Catalyst Funding to develop projects, maximize investment opportunities, and reserve implementation funds for 'ready-to-go' projects

Uplift Stewardship
of North Star vision throughout the California Jobs First effort

Community-Led Governance
Vision and Steering Committees sourced from key stakeholder groups

★ Denotes current stage



Introduction

Uplift Central Coast (Uplift) is a growing collective impact initiative—powered by Central Coast residents working together toward a shared vision of a sustainable, diverse, equitable, and resilient economy. The strategies laid out in this report are Uplift’s recommendations for how the region (see Figure 2) can effectively fulfill this vision, with an emphasis on uplifting those from disinvested communities. Strategies are based on extensive research and data analysis, community engagement, and expert consultation. Strategies outline target sector (specific industries), economic mobility (across nearly all industries), 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. This document is not static and is intended to be revisited as the region’s residents’ needs and economy evolves.

The Central Coast Region Fast Facts

- **Six of the state's 58 counties**, ranging in geographic size from the second smallest county in the state (Santa Cruz) to the 16th largest county in the state (San Luis Obispo)¹
- **2.3M residents** as of 2022, with county populations ranging from about 67K (San Benito County) to about 832K (Ventura County)²
- **1.2M residents who live in disinvested communities**³
- **42 percent of assets** scored in a 2024 study conducted by Visit California are **generating regional or national tourism demand**⁴
- **\$83.7B Annual Gross Regional Product** as of 2022, ranging by county from \$19M (Santa Cruz) to \$62B (Ventura County)⁵
- **\$1M average home price**⁶

Figure 2: The Central Coast Region



Figure 2: Map of the Central Coast Region

¹ San Luis Obispo County has 3,300.8 square miles of land area and is the 16th largest county in the State. Monterey County has 3,281.7 square miles of land area and is the 17th largest county. Santa Cruz County has 445.1 square miles of land area and is the 57th largest county. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Profiles", 2022 https://data.census.gov/profile?g=010XX00US_050XX00US06053,06069,06079,06083,06087,06111.

² U.S. Census Bureau. "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2022.DP05?g=050XX00US06111&y=2022>. Accessed on August 16, 2024.

³ The Uplift Central Coast GIS Dashboard overlays Disinvested Communities, Disadvantaged Communities, High Poverty/High Unemployment Cities, Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool tracts, California Native American Ancestral Lands, 2020 Census Demographics (by tract or county), and the physical locations of stakeholders across the Central Coast. Uplift Central Coast GIS Dashboard URL: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/41e159230a35437cb6b066d1aac0c45f>.

⁴ Central Coast Regional Advisory Committee, "Regional Tourism Strategic Plan," Visit California, 2024.

⁵ Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED), 2022.

⁶ Zillow, Redfin, Realtor.com, Rockethomes.com.

Uplift and California Jobs First

California Jobs First is the state’s program to analyze the Central Coast’s competitive economic advantages, listen deeply to residents, explore possibilities, and devise a broad-based, inclusive approach to economic development that accelerates sustainable and equitable economic growth.

Formed by three area economic development organizations—Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP), and REACH—Uplift is a six-county partnership aimed at widening and deepening regional collaboration to attract investment and expand quality job opportunities for residents of the Central Coast. Guided by community voice, testimony, and experience, the coalition manages an inclusive, diverse, transparent, and accountable regional planning process that has created this strategy with tactical recommendations for a series of investments to grow sustainable industries, diversify regional economies, and improve access to quality jobs within the Central Coast Region.

WHAT IS A “DISINVESTED COMMUNITY”?

California Jobs First defines “disinvested communities” as specific areas with disproportionately high rates of people with lower incomes. While Uplift uses this term in alignment with the state’s definition, Uplift acknowledges that these communities have been subjected to systemic injustice that results in disparities. Uplift also acknowledges that some individuals in these areas may not be considered to have lower income.

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



Uplift's Mission and Vision Statement

Our Mission

Uplift our residents as we uplift our regional economy, growing from within to create transformative opportunities for more than two million people across six Central Coast counties.

Our Vision

Create an inclusive economic resilience plan for the region through creative, community-led efforts.

Uplift's North Star

Expanding access to economic opportunity, advancing equitable economic growth, and accelerating mitigation and adaptation to the climate crisis represent Uplift's North Star (see Figure 3). The intersection of these principles guides Uplift's approach to decision-making, governance, community engagement, research, strategy development, and performance measurement. **Uplifting the region, particularly the Central Coast's 1.2 million residents living in disinvested communities (over half of all residents), is the primary aim of this plan.**

Economic Opportunity

Uplift strives to advance fair and inclusive access to resources, services, and employment that enables individuals of diverse backgrounds to achieve financial well-being and upward mobility. Through the strategies within this report, Uplift seeks to inspire the establishment of mechanisms to expand access to quality jobs by disinvested community members and improve conditions to enable residents to secure self-sufficiency.

Equity

Uplift recognizes historical and systemic injustices and acknowledges that different communities require different levels of support to succeed. Equity is integrated throughout the strategies as they focus on primarily benefiting disinvested communities and their implementation will require distribution of substantial resources to address disparities and achieve equal outcomes. Uplift puts equity into action by thoughtful community engagement and integration.

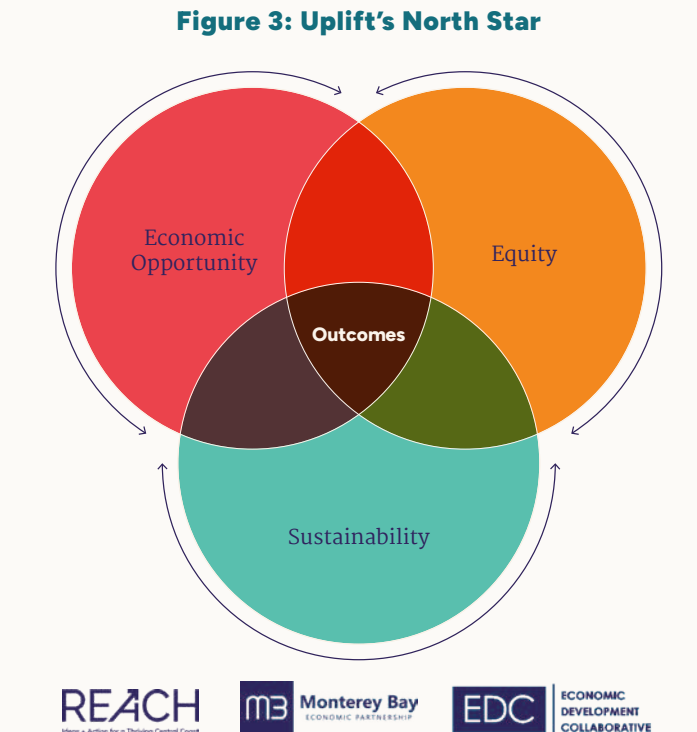


Figure 3: Uplift was formed by EDC, MBEP, and REACH, with a North Star of Economic Opportunity, Equity, and Sustainability.

Sustainability

Uplift seeks to develop a regional economy that is climate forward, resilient, and environmentally sustainable. Strategies focus on advancing industries with potential to bring sustained great environmental benefits to the region (e.g., renewable energy, clean tech, regenerative agriculture). In alignment with this principle and California Jobs First strategy requirements, no strategies support the direct production or usage of fossil fuels.

Systemic Tensions

As expected, when pursuing systemic change, Uplift has encountered several challenges and learned many lessons throughout the economic development planning process. Namely, the current national and geopolitical climate regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is increasingly polarized, impacting economic development strategies intended to support disinvested and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. While there is growing recognition of the importance of DEI in fostering economic resilience and innovation, potential political opposition and policy rollbacks in some areas pose significant challenges. This tension complicates efforts to create inclusive economic opportunities and equitable growth, particularly for communities historically marginalized by systemic inequities. Uplift strongly stands behind its equity-driven mission, embraces the complexity of this endeavor, and appreciates the community's support in acknowledging the following realities that have influenced Uplift's strategy development process and recommendations.

CHALLENGES FOR STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

New Coalition—Uplift is charged with an unprecedentedly broad goal and is newly formed. However, REACH, EDC, and MBEP have worked together in the past, and the resourcing through California Jobs First has enabled the capacity for broader and more extensive collaboration. Uplift is proud to partner with three convening organizations, over 40 Committee Members including representation from California Native American Tribes, 17 Community Based Organizations (CBOs), several advisory partners, and numerous industry and community members. Each entity involved brings with them their own organizational culture and preferred ways of working, presenting an opportunity to creatively navigate differences and achieve a consensus. Entities within Uplift are also physically located in different areas, having implications for the way this coalition works together. Creating effective, collaborative settings among organizations and individuals who are working together for the first time has presented challenges that come along with a new organization aiming to foster inclusion and cohesion, while consistently bringing additional entities and individuals into the project. Trust building was particularly important in Uplift's ability to engage both federally and

non-federally recognized tribes within California, who have complex relationships with political agencies and have dynamic and unique governance structures. Furthermore, Uplift is operating in parallel with similar pre-existing initiatives, which requires extensive collaboration and breaking down silos to optimize available resources to achieve shared goals.

Ambitious Timeline and Capacity Constraints—With a set amount of staffing and competing concurrent organizational priorities (e.g., iterative data collection, preparing for Catalyst Predevelopment Phase), Uplift faced limitations to the amount of collaboration, community engagement, and customization that could be completed ahead of submitting this report. Uplift is proud to have conducted extensive community engagement, reaching over 3,000 community members across the region from 2023 and 2024. Nonetheless, if additional time, staffing, or technical assistance were made available, Uplift could have expanded the specificity and reach of its community engagement to include even more residents and communities within the region. Uplift's partners also have varying levels of capacity to participate in this long, thoughtful planning process when some of them already face capacity constraints with their standard responsibilities. While immensely grateful for the opportunity to conduct potentially transformative work, additional resources and timeline flexibility could have supported more effective outcomes for the community.

Differing Priorities—Part of what makes California Jobs First a unique program is its emphasis on bringing together a wide range of community and industry, including those who are not used to participating in economic development planning processes. Bringing together a diverse group of people with different cultures and opinions, varying levels of trust in government, and different interests underscored the importance of communicating the Uplift process in multiple formats in order to build trust and understanding with these communities. Additionally, some participants sought more immediate, local projects to address their urgent needs and therefore, had a harder time focusing on longer-term regional strategies. Though challenging, these ranging perspectives strengthened Uplift's strategy development process.

Balancing Various Report Audiences—As Uplift sought to produce a report that reflects the requirements of California Jobs First and the voices of the community that it intends to serve, a challenging tension arose regarding balancing various audiences of this report. On one hand, the report must adhere to governmental language and criteria, ensuring it meets the state’s formal and historically bureaucratic systems and standards. On the other hand, Uplift is deeply committed to being community-driven, equitable, and inclusive. The language typically used in such reports can feel distant and inaccessible to the very communities they aim to support, lacking cultural relevance and relatability. Furthermore, due to disinvestment and other long-standing inequities, the government has yet to build sufficient trust among some Central Coast residents. Therefore, a substantial portion of the community generally distrusts processes like California Jobs First. Recognizing this systemic tension, Uplift strives to balance these requirements with language and approaches that resonate more authentically with the diverse communities they serve.

Equity Barriers—Uplift established an Inclusivity Fund to provide essential partners with resources to participate in Uplift’s California Jobs First planning process, promoting inclusive engagement, and prioritizing under-capitalized and under-resourced organizations. Eligible community members who requested resources were issued a \$100 gift card. In compliance with State of California requirements, most of the gift cards were electronic. Written instructions on how to use the gift cards were provided to participants in English and Spanish. However, some participants do not read, or speak languages other than English and Spanish, making this process challenging for them to navigate. Additionally, some participants did not have access to devices or broadband connection required to use electronic gift cards. Furthermore, Uplift’s

process is imperfect and could not have possibly been fully inclusive. While some Listening Sessions, for example, were scheduled outside of standard business hours and in a variety of locations throughout the region, this could not accommodate the schedule and geographic limitations for all Central Coast residents. Uplift acknowledges the privileges that come along with participating in this planning process and how that perspective may have influenced the contents of this report. Barriers for participation emphasize some of the challenges within the region and how current systems, even when trying to advance equity, pose limitations and further perpetuate disparities. Uplift strives to advance strategies to disrupt such systems and give all residents an equitable opportunity for success on the Central Coast.

Systemic Oppression—As Uplift recommends strategies that advance economic mobility, diversity, equity, and inclusion, Uplift also acknowledges that many economic disparities could be resolved by dismantling deeply-rooted systems of oppression, including but not limited to health and educational disparities informed by racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, and transphobia. Supporting measures to increase quality job access and upskill individuals from disinvested communities, for instance, has promise for advancing economic equity. However, many individuals from the region’s disinvested communities are well equipped—or even overly equipped—for quality jobs and are turned down because of discrimination. The success of well meaning, equity-driven strategies is still threatened by persistent systemic oppression. Therefore, in addition to the strategies in this report that aim to enhance economic mobility and lower barriers of success, Uplift encourages persistent efforts to eliminate oppressive systems to unlock the region’s full potential for all Central Coast residents.

Challenges for Strategy Implementation

State and National Challenges—While Uplift is focusing on the Central Coast Region’s specific economic development needs and opportunities, many of the topics surfaced throughout the strategy development process are challenges occurring throughout the State of California and the rest of the United States, such as increased costs of living, housing, and child care. Related strategies are included for consideration at the regional level, but making substantial progress locally is in part reliant on changes at state and national levels as well.

Regional Plan—Regional strategies are featured in this report. Yet, aside from its designation from the state, the “Central Coast Region” does not typically identify as one single region. Rather, there are tri-county sub-regions that function more like regions, with the three southern counties being more economically similar than the three northern counties.⁷ Within the six counties that make up the Central Coast, there is a high amount of economic, demographic, and geographic variation, making it difficult to establish practical strategies that are truly regional. Furthermore, densely populated areas of California tend to have larger political influence than more rural areas such as those prevalent throughout the Central Coast, which has historically driven state and federal funding to regions outside of the Central Coast.

Policy Constraints—Economic development is a powerful tool for improving the quality of life for a region. However, Uplift acknowledges that without supplemental policy changes and adjustments in the flow of resources, many structural challenges for the region will persist. Participants in Uplift’s community engagement efforts, for instance, tended to express gratitude for the State of California’s attention to helping them get quality jobs, and in the same breath, advocated for increased government attention on improving fundamental standards of living such as housing, child care, and healthcare (particularly mental health). Such issues being considered beyond the scope of California Jobs First are understandable, yet disappointing to many who understand these issues as interdependent to traditional economic development tools for improving quality of life.

THE HOUSING CHALLENGE

Community members consistently highlighted the **lack of affordable housing and high housing costs as the number one challenge on the Central Coast**. Across the region, in an already expensive state, residents face significant challenges in finding housing that is financially accessible. By designating housing as beyond the scope of California Jobs First, there is a perception among many community members that their concerns are not adequately acknowledged, and that critical issues facing individuals continue to be insufficiently addressed.

Private Sector Incentivization—Some of the strategies will require actions from the private sector and other entities. Uplift cannot require employers to take certain actions and the private sector in California faces steep policy and cost constraints. Therefore, additional incentives may be required to advance strategies that are beneficial for both employers and employees. The State of California may also intervene where there are systemic market failures to hold the private sector accountable and address community needs that are otherwise unmet by the private sector.

Ongoing Resources and Revenue Streams—The strategies and related ideas shared throughout this report collectively require a sizable level of resources to implement. Uplift is excited to see the impact enabled by the initial \$9M provided by the State of California for the Catalyst Predevelopment Phase. Uplift is also thinking bigger and broader about how to support the community and views this regional economic development plan as a foundation to build partnership and political will among members of Uplift’s vast and growing coalition. It will be essential, as part of plan implementation and Catalyst Predevelopment Phase project selection, to define those projects with the potential to draw in additional local, state, federal, and public-private resource models and revenue streams to achieve sustained, lasting impact. More time during this phase may have enabled further opportunities to increase Uplift’s initial pool of funding.

⁷ Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.



Continued Community Engagement

Community engagement has and will continue to be a critical component of Uplift’s work. In the weeks following the completion of this report, Uplift plans to socialize strategies with the community. Strategies will be presented and shared in several ways, including CBO-hosted community share-outs, public Uplift-hosted virtual meetings, and convenor-led meetings tailored to different audiences across the region. These free, open to the public sessions give Central Coast residents the opportunity to react to the strategies and discuss ideas and initiatives for implementation. Following the sessions, Uplift will include a version of the report on its website and enable a public comment feature to offer the community another feedback and idea generation mechanism. Moving forward, Uplift will maintain an inclusive governance structure engaging leadership Committees representative of the 12 state-identified California Jobs First stakeholder groups.⁸

⁸ The State of California designated categories of communities, causes, or industries to include in this California Jobs First process. Uplift acknowledges that identities are intersectional and that individuals may represent multiple stakeholder groups. Stakeholder groups for California Jobs First include Labor Organizations, Employers, Businesses and Business Associations, Grassroots and Community Based Organizations, Government Agencies, Economic Development Agencies, Philanthropic Organizations, Education and Training Providers, Workforce Entities, Environmental Justice Organizations, Workers Centers, Disinvested Communities, and California Native American Tribes.

Strategies at a Glance

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. Further explanation of each of these strategy categories is as follows:

Target Sector Strategies

Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services

Healthcare

Agriculture

Hospitality and Tourism

Uplift identified a set of sectors 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. Meanwhile, recognizing that multiple major industries on the Central Coast (agriculture, hospitality, and healthcare) contain significant numbers of lower-quality jobs, additional strategies seek to upgrade the quality of jobs in these sectors and improve pathways to better positions. All strategies seek to improve access to quality jobs for individuals from disinvested communities.

Economic Mobility Strategies

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

Training, Upskilling, and Learning and Development

Child Care

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 all sectors. Topics within this category include small business development, workforce training, and childcare. Uplift’s aim with prioritizing these strategies in addition to the target sector strategies is to advance equity and set up a foundation for more economic mobility across the full region.

Climate Resilience through Economic and Workforce Strategies

Meeting the Moment of California’s Climate Leadership

There are several topics beyond the scope of the California Jobs First focus of creating quality jobs and improving access to them, but foundational to a thriving, resilient community and quality of life for Central Coast residents. The Central Coast is navigating the transition from fossil fuels to renewable resources, 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

Housing

TK-12 & Higher Education

Transportation

Immigration

Arts & Culture

Nonprofit

There are several topics beyond the scope of California Jobs First that have profound impacts on a thriving, resilient, equitable, and sustainable economy for the Central Coast residents. Topics within this category include housing, TK-12 & higher education, transportation, immigration, arts & culture, and nonprofits. Paired with actions to increase presence of quality jobs and improve the quality of jobs within prominent industries, Uplift’s research and community engagement clearly highlight the need to improve livability for Central Coast residents and lower barriers that prevent many residents from succeeding.

The following strategies are explained in more depth in the remainder of the report. Community Development Strategies are also included starting on page 91. Other strategy ideas for the region's consideration beyond the scope of California Jobs First are listed in Annex 12: Initiatives, Ideas, and Strategies for Further Exploration.

Target Sector Strategies

BOOSTING QUALITY JOBS CREATION

Precision Manufacturing & Advanced Business Services

1. Accelerate Sub-Baccalaureate Workforce Pipeline Development
2. Bolster the Region's Long-Term Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Pipeline
3. Enhance the Capacity of the Region's Talent Ecosystem to Serve Priority Sectors

4. Unlock the Full Potential of the Region's Innovation Assets
5. Increase Supports for High-Growth Entrepreneurship
6. Enhance Core and Sector-Relevant Infrastructure
7. Ensure the Sustainability of Small and Middle Market Firms in Target Sectors

ENHANCING JOB QUALITY IN PROMINENT SECTORS

Healthcare

1. Expand Pathways Into Quality Jobs For Lower Paid Healthcare Positions
2. Bolster Workforce Pipeline Between Educational Institutions and Healthcare Institutions
3. Expand Training and Awareness on Healthcare Career Paths

Agriculture

1. Creating an AgTech and Regenerative Agriculture Ready Workforce
2. Strengthen AgTech Commercialization, Innovation, and Research Initiatives

Hospitality and Tourism

(Relevant strategies are integrated in other sections)

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
2. Bolster Small Business Financial Capacity and Access to Capital
3. Promote Collaborative Models of Local, Broad-Based Ownership
4. Support Community Kitchens and Regional Food Hubs

Training, Upskilling, and Learning Development

1. On the Job Training and Upskilling
2. Training and Apprenticeship Programs
3. Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Upskilling Programs
4. Scaling Family Self-Sufficiency Programs

Child Care

1. Expand Child Care Workforce
2. Enhance Child Care Infrastructure
3. Employer Supported Child Care
4. Centralized Resources to Navigate the Child Care System

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
 2. Develop a Clean Energy Workforce
 3. Drive Equitable Access to the Clean Economy
 4. Protect and Conserve the Natural Environment
 5. Adapt to a Changing Climate
-

Community Development Strategies

Housing

1. Expand Employer Sponsored Housing
2. Promote Creative Housing Models

TK-12 and Higher Education

1. Strengthen Curriculum Aligned with the Regional and Future Economy
2. Prepare Disinvested Communities for Higher Education

Transportation

1. Increase Public Transportation Infrastructure
2. Support Equitable Reduced or Free Fares for Public Transit

Immigration

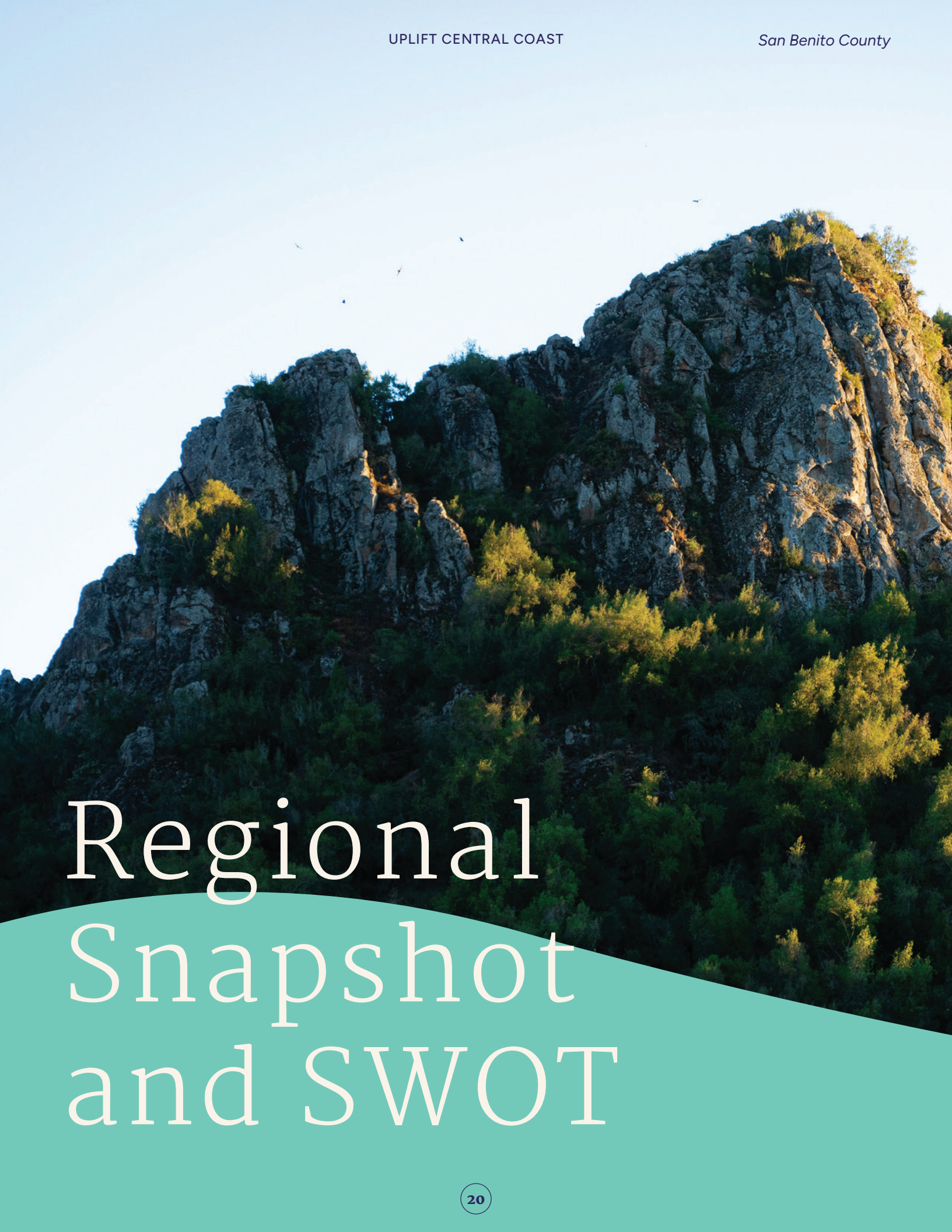
1. Establish an Immigrant Welcome Center
2. Expand Financial Support and Education Programs for Immigrants
3. Invest in Educational and Mentorship Program for Immigrants

Arts and Culture

1. Support Funding for the Arts
2. Revitalize Art and Cultural

Nonprofit

1. Expand Diversity of Nonprofit Leaders and Boards
2. Develop Grants Training
3. Increase Capacity of Nonprofits



Regional Snapshot and SWOT

Uplift facilitated extensive community engagement and leveraged data from the Regional Plan Part I to conduct an analysis of the Central Coast’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This analysis captures the region’s current status, highlighting its vibrant community pride, scenic nature, innovation hubs, educational institutions, agricultural prowess, and iconic destinations. However, it also notes critical challenges such as high housing and living costs, lack of quality jobs and child care, language barriers, and infrastructure issues. **The SWOT analysis serves as a foundation for ongoing evaluation and strategic planning during Uplift’s Catalyst Predevelopment and Implementation Phases.**

Regional Snapshot: Analysis of the Central Coast

The Central Coast, comprising Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties, is a diverse area with six distinct metropolitan economies characterized by vibrant communities and varying economic landscapes. This region is emerging as a hub for an innovation-driven economy with high-wage sectors such as aerospace, biotech, and precision manufacturing showing substantial growth. The region capitalizes on its extensive agricultural lands and scenic natural assets like beaches, forests, and the iconic Highway 1, enhancing both its tourism and agricultural sectors while offering residents access to exceptional natural surroundings.

The Central Coast is marked by wide socio-economic disparities, with over 1 million residents struggling to make ends meet, meaning their incomes do not cover basic costs of living. About 45 percent of Central Coast residents belong to families who struggle to make ends meet, as shown in Figure 4.⁹ These disparities are in part due to the region's foothold in typically low-paying industries, such as agriculture and hospitality and tourism, compounded by high living costs. Only 25 percent of the region's jobs qualify as quality jobs¹⁰—jobs that provide a living wage, health benefits, future job security, and per community input are free from discrimination and contribute meaningfully to the community. High housing costs, expensive child care, and long commutes further diminish the quality of life and reduce wage value within the region.

Figure 4: Share of Population of Families that Struggle to Make Ends Meet

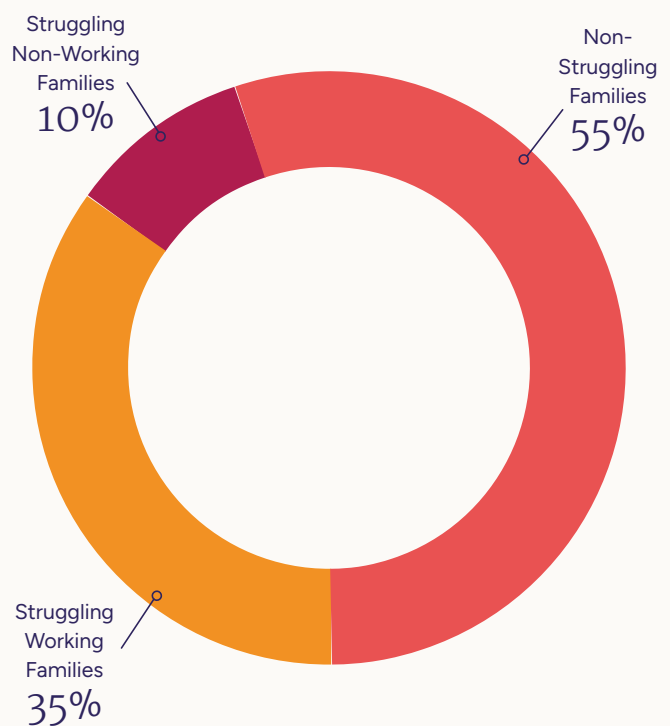


Figure 4: Share of Central Coast families that struggle to make ends meet. Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year.

⁹ See page 63 of Uplift's *Regional Plan Part I* for more information on the share of population of families that struggle to make ends meet.

¹⁰ Reference the glossary and the Introduction for more information on how Uplift defines a "quality job."

Data and lived experiences of residents show that realities look different across the region, revealing there is no one singular Central Coast experience. The Central Coast is a large, diverse region and is not a monolith. Based on 2020 racial and ethnic demographic analysis of Census Data there is a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino/x/e residents compared to the national average, with growth in this group from 2010 to 2020 mirroring broader state and national trends.¹¹ In contrast, these counties have lower percentages of Asian and Black or African American residents compared to California overall. Demographics throughout the Central Coast vary from county to county and when compared to the rest of the United States. For example, at 65 percent of the population, San Luis Obispo County has a higher proportion of white residents compared to any other Central Coast County or compared to the U.S. average.¹¹ In contrast, about 60 percent of Monterey County's population is Hispanic or

Latino/x/e, which is above both the California and United States average.¹² Given this context, immigration reform stands out as a major opportunity to address some of these disparities and foster inclusive economic growth.

There are also differences in economic trends. Economic analysis of industries and worker commuting patterns, for instance, suggests that Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties in the northern part of the region and San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties in the southern part of the region form their own distinct, but economically cohesive geographies. The two sub-regions have unique strengths, assets, challenges, industries, and socioeconomic dynamics. Sub-regional differences are also reflected across a range of issues, from industry performance to costs of living and access to education and training.

¹¹ Please reference the "understanding the Central Coast" section starting on page 29 of Uplift's *Regional Plan Part I* for more information on demographic analysis.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, "Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics," 2020. Decennial Census, DEC Demographic Profile, Table DP1, 2020, accessed on November 20, 2023, [https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDP2020.DP1?g=010XX00US_040XX00US06_050XX00US06053,06069,06079,06083,06087,06111&d=DEC Demographic Profile](https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDP2020.DP1?g=010XX00US_040XX00US06_050XX00US06053,06069,06079,06083,06087,06111&d=DEC%20Demographic%20Profile).



Central Coast SWOT Analysis

Drawing from data referenced in the Regional Plan Part I and extensive community engagement conducted throughout 2024, Uplift consolidated the analysis of the Central Coast's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). This SWOT analysis (see Figure 5) reflects the current status of the region and may benefit from revisiting and updating as applicable throughout Uplift's Catalyst Predevelopment and Implementation Phases.

SWOT analyses are comprised of the following four components:

Strengths—Internal attributes such as positive assets, resources, and characteristics that can be leveraged and built upon to grow a more inclusive and sustainable regional economy. It is important to acknowledge that while these strengths can provide advantages, they do

not benefit everyone equitably. The impact of these strengths may vary across communities and interested groups, necessitating a nuanced approach to ensure that benefits are distributed more fairly.

Weaknesses—Internal factors that limit the economic growth potential including liabilities and barriers to economic development and quality of life.

Opportunities—External conditions that enhance the competitive advantages and positive trends that hold potential for the attraction of new businesses, investments, skilled workers, and more quality jobs.

Threats—External challenges, unfavorable factors, and trends that are currently and could continue to negatively affect the regional economy.

Figure 5: The Central Coast SWOT Analysis



Figure 5: High-level overview of the Central Coast's SWOT analysis.

STRENGTHS:

Community Pride: Central Coast residents expressed a deep sense of pride in their community. Many community members conveyed that the community they have is one of the main reasons they stay in the region. The region is linguistically diverse and home to cultural festivals, farmers’ markets, and art shows that celebrate the diverse backgrounds of its residents. These events not only highlight the unique traditions and languages of the community but also foster a sense of belonging and unity among residents. The Central Coast is home to a variety of community organizations and nonprofits that actively engage residents in initiatives aimed at improving well-being and quality of life, addressing issues such as education, health, and sustainability.

Scenic Nature: The Central Coast has over 350 miles of scenic Pacific Ocean shoreline, a feature enjoyed by locals and visitors alike, stimulating tourism from throughout the world. Other scenic features in the region include National Parks, like the Channel Islands National Park and Pinnacles National Park, and State Parks like Hearst San Simeon State Park, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, and Montaña de Oro State Park. Terrain throughout the Central Coast includes beaches, rolling hills, mountains, and agricultural farmland. The natural landscape of the Central Coast is treasured amongst the community, with nearly 75 percent of participants in the Central Coast Public Opinion Poll¹³ rating the environment, including coasts, forests, open space, air, and water, as good or excellent.

Innovation Hubs and Educational Institutions: World-class innovation hubs and education institutions attract tech startups, top researchers, and college students from around the world. The Central Coast is home to many respected educational and research institutions such as the California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), University of California (UC) Santa

Cruz, University of California (UC) Santa Barbara, the Naval Postgraduate School, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, and Monterey Bay Tech Hub. The Central Coast is also home to 16 Hispanic Serving Institutions such as California Lutheran University, California State University (CSU) Channel Islands, Hartnell College, California State University (CSU) Monterey Bay, and Allan Hancock College. There is world-leading biotech innovation centered in the office parks of Thousand Oaks, NavalX Tech Bridges in Port Hueneme and Monterey, and a high concentration of U.S. Department of Defense research labs. Additionally, Santa Barbara County is home to the first-class space hub of Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB), and from Marina and Salinas to San Luis Obispo and Ventura cutting-edge Advanced Air Mobility (AAM)¹⁴ startups are taking root.

Regional Produce: Fueled by suitable weather conditions, the Central Coast is optimal for growing in-demand crops such as avocados and berries and is considered a leader in certified organic agriculture. The Central Coast is often referred to as the “salad bowl of the world” and the “berry capital” due to the produce grown in the region. However, while the region boasts of its agricultural outputs, there are downsides to the agriculture industry such as the lack of quality jobs in the sector.

Iconic Destinations: The Central Coast features world-renowned tourist destinations such as the City of Ventura, Carmel-by-the-Sea, the notable Highway 1 road trip, and Pebble Beach, which hosts Concours d’Elegance, an internationally renowned classic-car competition, and world class Professional Golfers’ Association (PGA) golf courses. Like the agricultural industry, the hospitality and tourism sector faces issues in providing quality jobs to the region.

¹³ Please see Annex 6: Uplift Public Opinion Poll Summary for more information on Uplift’s Public Opinion Poll.

¹⁴ Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is a rapidly emerging, new sector of the aerospace industry which aims to safely and efficiently integrate highly automated aircraft into the National Airspace System (NAS). AAM is not a single technology, but rather a collection of new and emerging technologies being applied to the aviation transportation system, particularly in new aircraft types. Source: “Section 6. Advanced Air Mobility” The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Advanced Air Mobility (faa.gov).

WEAKNESSES:

High Cost of Housing: The steep cost of housing poses considerable challenges for many of the region's residents and increasingly diminishes the purchasing power of low-income families. High housing costs disproportionately affect families who make moderate and lower incomes, making it difficult for them to afford suitable housing. Across community engagement sessions, the high cost of housing was brought up as the top issue facing Central Coast residents. This not only impacts individual households but also undermines workforce stability, as potential and current employees may need to seek more affordable living conditions elsewhere. The high cost of housing contributes to economic displacement, where locals are priced out of their communities, leading to decreased community cohesion and vitality. Community members, especially those who are Black and Indigenous, have described a feeling of erasure.

High Cost of Living: Residents across the Central Coast expressed that the overall cost of living is extremely high. Between the cost of utilities, transportation, and food many individuals feel immense financial burdens. During a Listening Sessions hosted by Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) in Ventura County a participant stated, "El costo del alquiler y de la vida misma es muy caro, y además es más fácil acceder a comida rápida que a comida saludable" [English translation: "The cost of rent and life itself is very expensive and it is also easier to access fast food than healthy food"].

Lack of Quality Jobs: Insufficient quality jobs is an issue facing many residents within the Central Coast. Industries with many jobs such as agriculture and hospitality and tourism tend to offer lower wages and less stable employment conditions. The strong foothold of these industries contributes to the region's overall lack of quality jobs, leaving residents with uncertainty about their long-term economic prospects in the region.

Lack of Child Care: The lack of affordable and conveniently located child care is a major barrier for workers, especially working families, in the region. Community feedback highlights a scarcity of suitable child care options, specifically options that align with varied work schedules. This problem is particularly acute

for farmworkers and hospitality workers whose hours differ from the typical nine-to-five workday. The shortfall in adequate child care exacerbates workforce shortages and impedes the region's economic growth. Access to child care is crucial for enabling families, notably women, to participate in the workforce effectively. During Uplift's Child Care Roundtable, a participant shared, "The child care problem is endemic. In our very expensive region, in a very expensive state, the cost of child care is way out of balance for what we'd want it to be. There are some programs that exist that relieve the burden for lower income [families], however, there are families just above that margin who are still struggling who cannot qualify."¹⁵

Language Barriers: The Central Coast's linguistic diversity enriches its culture and presents challenges for community members. Quality jobs are typically reserved for English speakers, creating barriers to community members who only speak a language other than English. Additionally, some community members shared that there is favoritism of people who speak both English and Spanish over people who speak one of those languages or other languages. The challenges imposed by these language barriers extend beyond the job market. Individuals often struggle to receive adequate medical care and face challenges in the education system if they do not speak English.

Infrastructure Challenges: The vast distances between homes and essential resources such as workplaces, schools, and healthcare facilities necessitate long commutes that are often reliant on gas-powered vehicles. This not only leads to increased living expenses due to high fuel costs but also contributes to higher emissions, worsening environmental concerns. Additionally, the lack of robust public transportation options limits mobility for those without personal vehicles, often limiting their options for work. Another infrastructure challenge is inconsistent broadband connectivity, especially in rural areas, which hinders equitable access to the internet. This digital divide impacts a range of needs and opportunities such as access to remote work, telehealth services, small business operations, online education, and emergency services and information, placing certain community members at a disadvantage compared to others.

¹⁵ Quote from the Child Care Roundtable hosted by Uplift virtually.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Businesses

Services: The Central Coast has potential for greater quality job creation through the convergence of precision manufacturing and advanced business services industries into specializations spanning aerospace, biotechnology, agricultural technology, advanced air mobility, blue technology, and more. This focus aligns with global needs for more sustainable and technologically advanced solutions. Additionally, there are emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and forms of automation that could improve efficiency and reduce waste, but also create the risk of job displacement. This underscores the need to prepare the current and future workforce to adapt and thrive in an evolving technological landscape.

Community members are yearning for a future where there are more opportunities for the next generation.

One Listening Session participant stated, “La razón por la que participo en estas reuniones es porque quiero que mis hijos vivan en una economía estable con un trabajo estable y una vida estable” [English Translation: “The reason I participate in these meetings is because I want my children to live in a stable economy with a stable job and stable life”].¹⁶

Job Quality Improvements: Improving quality and productivity of jobs in prominent industries such as healthcare, agriculture, and hospitality and tourism is critical for incumbent workers’ well-being and the feasibility of living on the Central Coast.

Workforce Development, Training, and Education:

Expanding training and education through greater alignment of economic and workforce development activities can increase the amount and diversity of qualified students, apprentices, and workers. These efforts can include creating training programs that connect directly with job opportunities, enhancing language learning opportunities, and increasing access to college degrees, especially for residents from disinvested communities. Additionally, while the specific impacts of

AI remain uncertain, it is crucial to train the current and future workforce to stay agile and adapt to the potential changes to the marketplace that AI may bring.

State and Federal Investment in Climate and

Infrastructure: Critical infrastructure developments such as enhancing broadband connectivity, improving and expanding transportation options, and building more affordable housing are essential for supporting the region’s economic growth and improving the quality of life. Additionally, investments in renewable energy and climate resilience initiatives aim to reduce carbon footprints while fostering new industries and job creation.

Immigration Reform: Immigration reform presents a critical opportunity area for the Central Coast. The region’s economy is notably supported by both documented and undocumented immigrants, particularly in sectors like agriculture, hospitality and tourism, and construction. Additionally, immigration brings cultural diversity, enriching communities with different perspectives, traditions, and experiences, which enhances the social fabric and vibrancy of the region. However, immigrants face numerous challenges, including lack of access to legal status, exploitative work conditions, and barriers to social services and education. Comprehensive immigration reform could provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented workers, improve labor rights and protections, and enhance access to education and health care. By addressing these issues, the Central Coast can leverage the full potential of its immigrant workforce, fostering greater economic stability and growth.

¹⁶ Quote from a Listening Session hosted by Mujeres en Acción in Monterey County.

THREATS:

Increasing Cost of Living: There has been a continued increase in the region's already high cost of living, driven by inflation. This may exacerbate residents' financial challenges, disproportionately impacting those who are already struggling. A Listening Session participant stated, "Es muy caro vivir aquí. Todo es caro, el alquiler sube cada año, el agua, la electricidad, todo sube y el trabajo disminuye" [English Translation: "It is very expensive to live here. Everything is expensive. The rent goes up every year, the water, electricity, everything goes up and work goes down"].¹⁷ Increasing prices may drive out locals from being able to afford their homes, dividing families and diminishing the region's diversity, further exacerbating gentrification and displacement.

Climate Change Impacts: Extreme heat, wildfire, droughts, sea level rise, flooding and other impacts of climate change continue to pose issues for the region's health, safety, and economic prosperity, particularly tied to the region's prominent industries. Climate change has already caused issues in the region, such as the well-publicized mudslides near Santa Barbara, flooding resulting in closure of access to Big Sur, flooding displacing residents in Pájaro and Salinas Valley, and lost grape and wine production due to wildfires in Monterey, which create short-term disruption and longer-term instability for businesses. The effects of climate change will also cause added health and economic stresses on outdoor workers, who need to contend with the extreme weather conditions and potential loss of work.

Water Resource Management: Limited access to freshwater is being contested. This struggle is also draining the financial and ecological resources of the community. Ongoing issues with water scarcity and

management could limit residential, agricultural, and industrial growth. Water scarcity could further restrict the availability of quality jobs if industries such as manufacturing are unable to expand. Additionally, housing costs may continue to escalate if new developments struggle to secure water rights and the overall housing supply remains constrained.

Discrimination and Racism: National data and qualitative input both suggest that entrepreneurs who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or members of other historically oppressed communities face distinct systemic barriers (e.g., less access to capital), often compounded by the intersectionality of multiple forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, religious discrimination, and ableism. These adversities greatly impact residents' ability to start and sustain a business, fully participate in the workforce, and achieve economic security for themselves and their families. Community members specifically gave examples of times they have experienced racism in the region. One participant from a Listening Session hosted by the Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP explained, "I feel like the biggest barrier is people not believing in me because of my age and race."¹⁸ However, there are organizations on the Central Coast working to alleviate these systematic issues, such as Black Leaders and Allies Collaborative (BLAAC). One Roundtable participant shared, "I support BLAAC. The Black community is super small and we get overseen. Black people are othered [in the Central Coast Region] in a way that does not happen in other parts of the country."¹⁹

¹⁷ Quote from a Listening Session hosted by Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) in Ventura County.

¹⁸ Quote from a Listening Session hosted by Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP held virtually.

¹⁹ Quote from the Small Business (Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Entrepreneurship) Roundtable hosted by Uplift virtually.



Strategy Development Process Overview

At the heart of Uplift’s work have been the voices and experiences of the thousands of community members who informed and shaped the outcomes of this Regional Plan. Uplift reviewed an extensive set of quantitative and qualitative research and data, existing regional strategies, industry and employer input and community engagement data to develop the strategies included in this report. Community members, CBO’s, and Uplift Committee Members submitted strategy ideas that were subsequently evaluated in consultation with community and subject-matter advisors to bring forward a recommended set of strategies that serve the Central Coast region. While Uplift believes in the potential for each strategy to produce lasting change in alignment with its Theory of Change it also views this Regional Plan as dynamic and continuously evolving to optimally support current and future needs and aspirations of the region’s residents.

Uplift’s Strategy Development Stages

Figure 6 depicts Uplift’s strategy development stages which are described in more depth below.

Figure 6: Uplift’s Strategy Development Stages

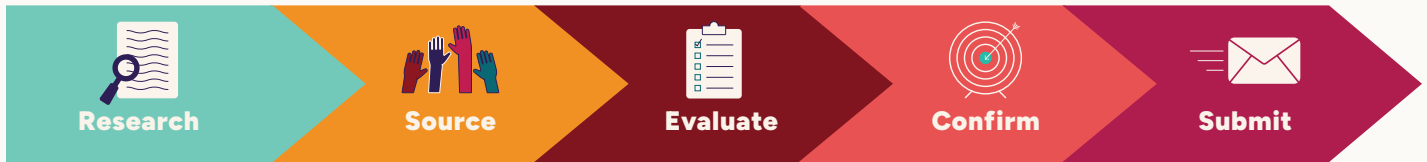


Figure 6: A visual representation of Uplift’s strategy development stages, starting with the research phase, which provided context for Regional Plan Part I through the submission of the Regional Plan Part II.

1. **Research:** From May 2023 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*. While the bulk of Uplift’s research occurred during this time, research—primarily community and industry engagement—continued throughout the Source and Evaluate phases. More information on the Uplift Public Opinion Poll is available in Annex 6: Uplift Public Opinion Poll Summary.
2. **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, interviews, the Strategy Lab, and public Community Meetings. Throughout 2023 and 2024 Uplift conducted over 95 Listening Sessions in partnership with local CBOs, 13 industry Roundtables, 72 interviews, and multiple public community update meetings across the region, engaging over 4,140 community members. Listening Sessions held throughout 2024 were aimed at sourcing strategies from disinvested communities. During a Community Meeting hosted in 2024, over 140 people joined to provide feedback on drafted strategy ideas and suggest new strategies for consideration.
3. **Evaluate:** After consolidating the list of strategy ideas, Uplift systematically evaluated each strategy idea based on the following criteria.²¹ This criterion was co-developed with the Uplift Vision and Steering Committee.
 - a. Alignment with the scope of California Jobs First
 - b. Alignment with Uplift’s North Star and Vision
 - c. Alignment with data findings and community engagement themes
 - d. Reasonably feasible to implement

After evaluating each strategy, Uplift prioritized a list of strategies to be included in this report.
4. **Confirm:** After completing the 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 relevant feedback was integrated, the Uplift Steering Committee adopted the Regional Plan Part II.
5. **Submit:** Uplift submitted this report to the State of California by August 31, 2024.

²⁰ Please see Annex 4: Community Engagement Summary, Annex 5: Roundtable Summary, and Annex 9: Strategy Lab Outputs for more information on Community Engagement (Listening Sessions and the Community Update), Roundtables, and the Strategy Lab.

²¹ Please see Annex 11: Strategy Evaluation Criteria for more details on the strategy evaluation criteria.



After submitting to the state, Uplift will publish the full Regional Plan Part II and an Executive Summary for public use. These documents will be available in English and Spanish, along with a recorded video in Mixteco. Uplift will engage various outreach channels, such as local newspapers and media, to disseminate this report and highlight ongoing efforts. Uplift aims to reach a broad audience across the Central Coast, fostering community engagement, shared ownership, and continued focus on community-centered initiatives.

Uplift looks forward to moving into the Catalyst Predevelopment and Implementation Phases to put the strategies in this report into action. As part of this effort, Uplift may develop a funding portfolio and track funding (e.g., grant) opportunities that align with Uplift's work. Uplift will also leverage the California Jobs First process to draw other resources (e.g., state, federal, and philanthropic funding) to the region by strategically aligning our initiatives with broader economic development goals and demonstrating measurable impacts on local communities. Through continued collaboration and establishing new community and government partnerships, Uplift will create a compelling case for support and investment that underscores our commitment to regional prosperity and resilience.

Foundational Research Findings

Wide-ranging analysis (see the *Regional Plan Part I* and *databook*) that Uplift published in January 2024 presented both a sobering view of the region’s progress in delivering equitable growth—despite remarkable economic assets—and outlined concrete paths forward to improve job quality, access, and livability.

Today, approximately 45 percent of Uplift residents belong to a family that struggles to make ends meet. This reflects the region’s economic mix, the weighting of its labor market towards low-wage agriculture and

hospitality jobs, and high costs of living. Only 25 percent of the region’s jobs qualify as “quality jobs,” meaning they pay a livable wage, offer employer-sponsored health insurance, and offer stability in retaining a quality job over the next decade (see Figure 7). An additional 15 percent of jobs qualify as “promising jobs,” meaning they lead to a quality job within a decade. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents and those with lower levels of traditional education are disproportionately underrepresented in holding quality or promising jobs.

Figure 7: Share of Quality and Promising Jobs

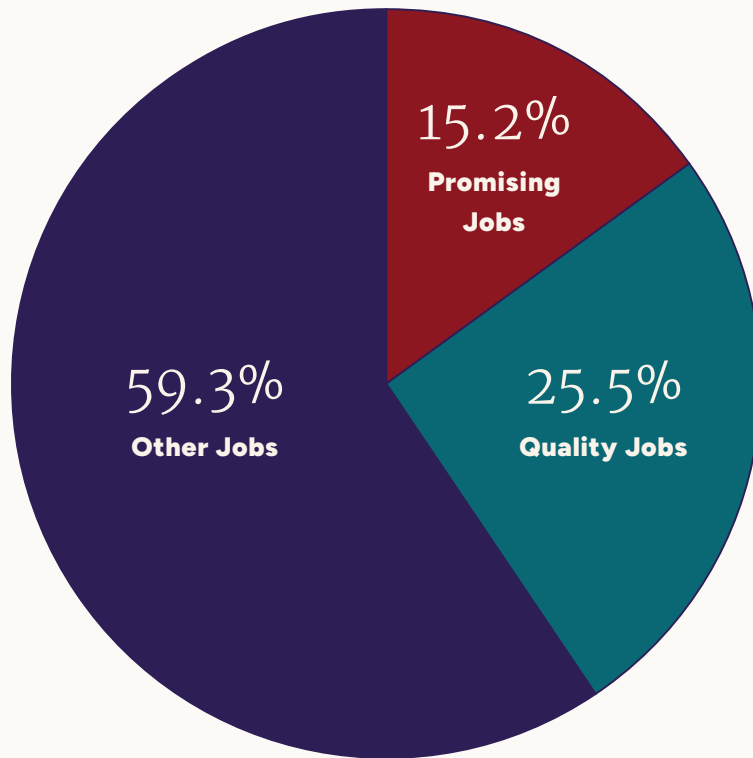


Figure 7: Share of Quality and Promising Jobs on the Central Coast. Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample.

The chances of holding a quality or promising job vary largely by industry (see Figure 8). 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 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.²² **This means that both job creation and workforce preparedness efforts need to be carefully targeted.**

Figure 8: Share of Quality and Promising Jobs in Regional Industries

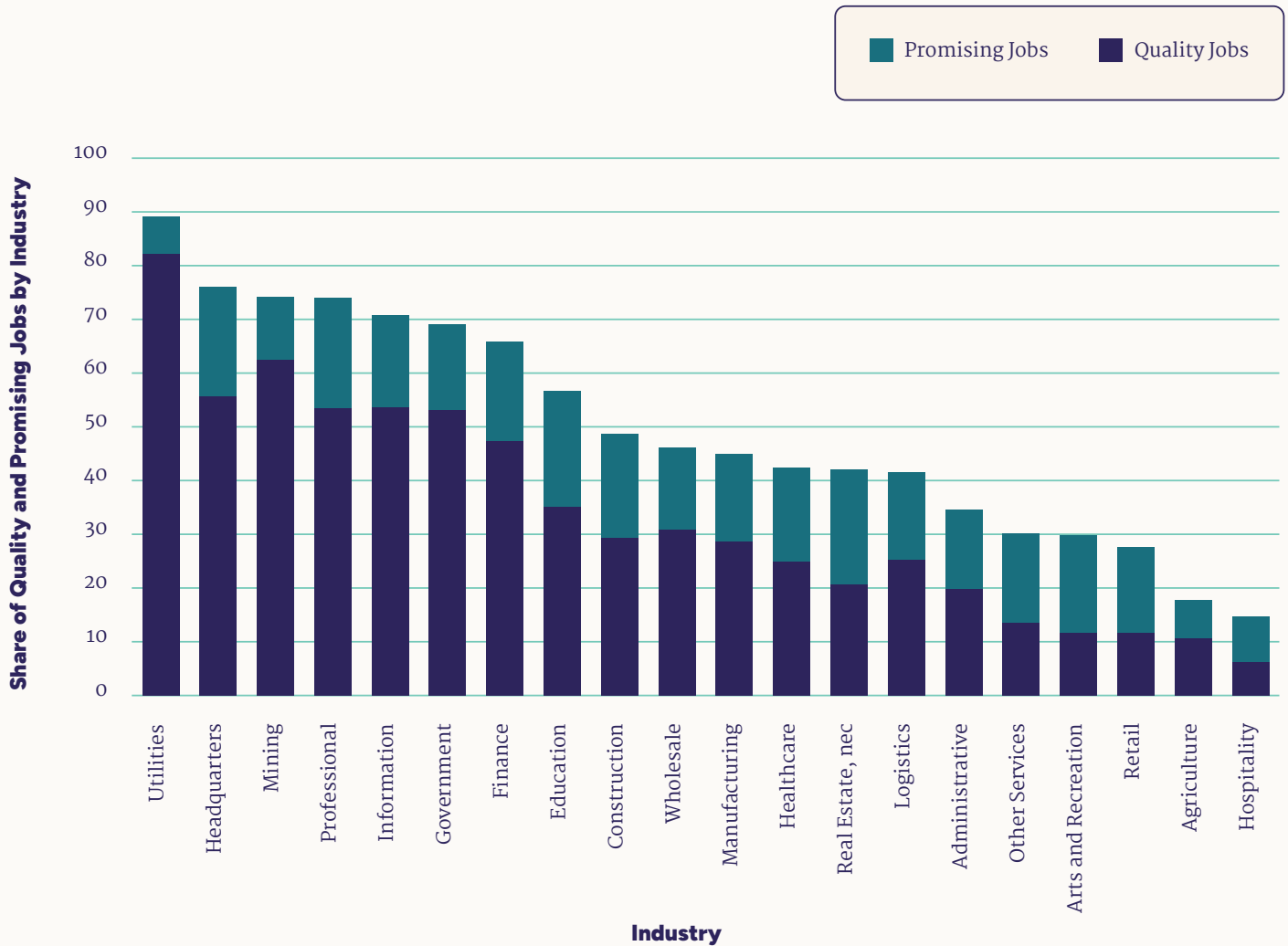


Figure 8: Share of Quality and Promising Jobs in Regional Industries. Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample.

²² Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample.

Figure 9: Estimated Percentage of Children Ages 0–12 with Parents in the Labor Force for whom Licensed Child Care Spaces are Available, by County, 2021

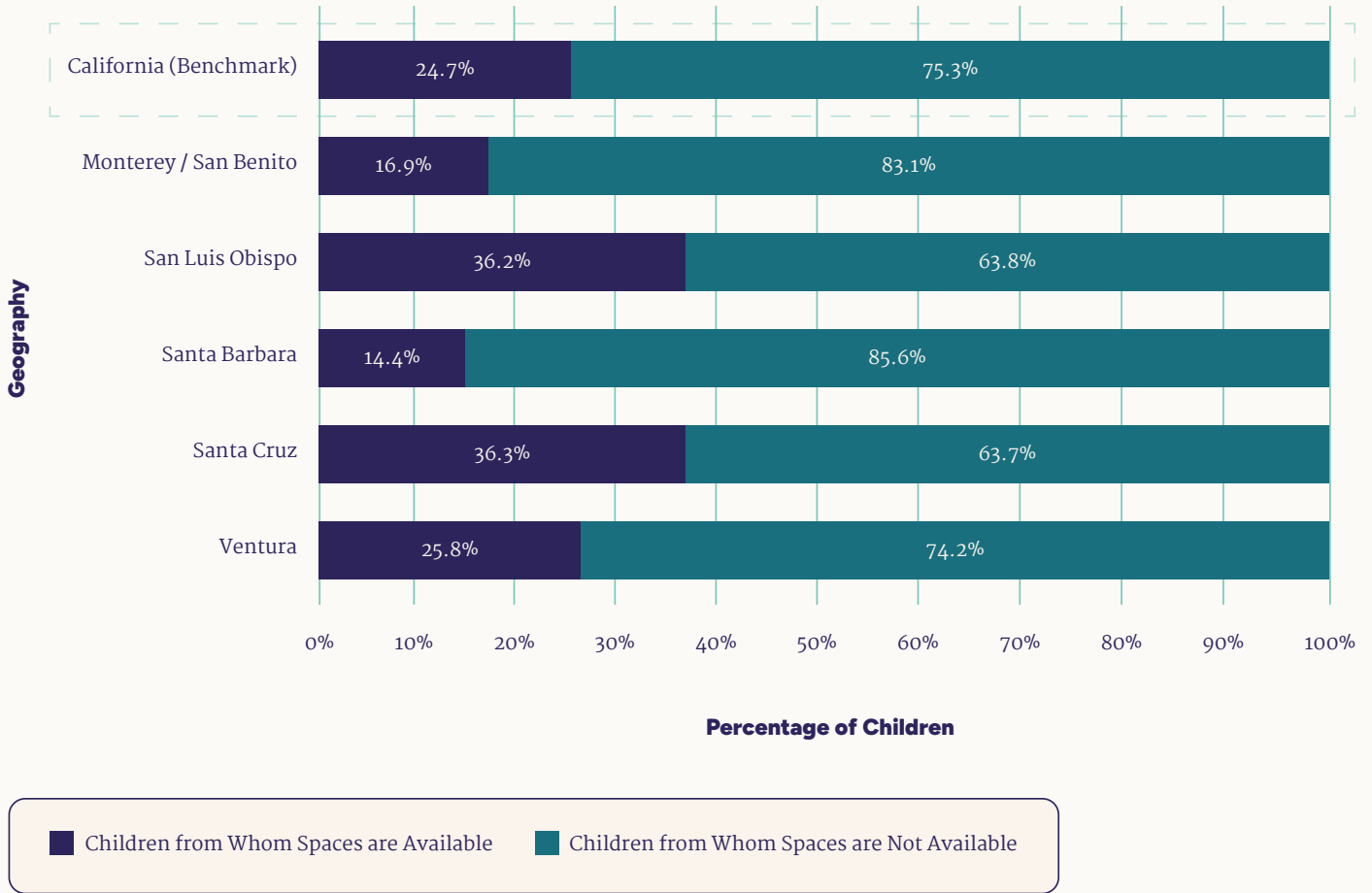


Figure 9: Availability of licensed child care spaces for working families. Source: Analysis of California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, California Child Care Portfolio (Nov. 2022); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey public use microdata (Oct. 2022).

Enabling the Central Coast to offer all its residents the opportunity to thrive—by improving the number of quality jobs, bolstering access to those opportunities, lowering cost of living burdens, and more broadly promoting economic mobility—is an urgent imperative for the region.

Implications for Closing Opportunity Gaps

Leveraging quantitative analyses including economic growth, competitiveness, industry clustering, job quality, worker access, and environmental impact, research identified a set of quality job creation opportunities in **precision manufacturing** and **advanced business services**. These industries converge to support additional strengths in areas including advanced air mobility, clean and blue tech, and microelectronics. Critically, these areas concentrate quality and promising jobs for mid-skill workers with less than a bachelor’s degree. Targeted training opportunities and support services are crucial to ensuring that residents from disinvested communities can access these opportunities.

Meanwhile, recognizing the substantial scale of employment in **agriculture, hospitality and tourism, and healthcare**, research pointed to focusing solutions on both bolstering job quality in these sectors and promoting improved pathways to existing quality and promising jobs. Review of leading practices suggested that approaches may include:

- Helping firms improve productivity and enable workers to garner higher wages through process innovations (e.g., technology adoption)
- Working with employers to adopt business practices to better support workers (e.g., scheduling stability; improved human resources operations; broader healthcare availability, including mental health services; and investments in transportation access)

- Pursuing intermediary functions or employer collaboratives to provide scale in offering improved benefits (e.g., child care) to workers
- Advancing public policy action to “raise the floor” on working conditions
- Supporting targeted pathways and incumbent worker training for workers to transition to jobs with higher job quality

In certain industries, such as agriculture, it may be more difficult to advance these solutions due to low margins set by international commodities markets and hierarchies of power that perpetuate systemic inequities which disproportionately impact a predominantly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (and oftentimes immigrant) workforce.

Labor market interventions, however, are not the only solutions needed to build a more equitable Central Coast. Lowering costs of living and improving well-being for residents must be a major priority for the region. Pursuing funding, policies, and programs that expand the availability of **affordable housing** and **child care**, provide pathways to wealth-building through **entrepreneurship**, and bolster community vitality through **arts and culture**, among other priorities, are critical to ensuring that all residents can prosper and thrive on the Central Coast.



Assets to Build On

While recognizing regional challenges, the Central Coast boasts remarkable economic assets that can be leveraged for inclusive economic growth. These include world-leading capabilities in research and development and innovation. UC Santa Barbara, for instance, has distinctive strengths including autonomous systems, computing, engineering, and physics, with myriad applications through industry. UC Santa Cruz is specialized in life and earth sciences disciplines such as oceanography and marine biology. Cal Poly evidences strengths in agriculture-related areas and engineering. Other key innovation drivers include federal installations such as Naval Base Ventura County and the Naval Postgraduate School (in Monterey) and the presence of distinctive infrastructure assets, such as Vandenberg Space Force Base. A growing number of local initiatives, such as the “FATHOMWERX” innovation hub located at Naval Base Ventura County, are working to further bolster the economic impact of these assets, including improving access for local firms.

Altogether, these assets support dynamic, market-leading business activity emblematic of the California innovation economy. This includes development and testing of advanced air mobility technologies (including presence of industry leaders Joby Aviation, ZeroAvia, Archer, and Wisk), semiconductor supply chain and quantum computing innovators (such as Google Quantum), AgTech (including innovation and entrepreneurship activity led by the Western Growers Association), commercial space launch and operations activity, and one of the world’s leading biotech firms (Amgen).

Climate Impacts on Economic Opportunities

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. Challenges shared across industries include impacts on the reliability of major regional infrastructure assets, such as the power grid and highways responsible for moving workers and goods. Major infrastructure junctures such as Elkhorn Slough Bridge in Santa Cruz County are increasingly encumbered by flooding and erosion. Highway 1 near Big Sur recently reopened after a multi-month closure prompted by a section of weathered road falling into the Pacific Ocean. Major wildfires in Monterey, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties, such as the 2018 Thomas Fire, have also resulted in significant disruptions to businesses and livelihoods. For local jurisdictions, the rising costs of responding to these extreme events can crowd out investment in other priorities and services, compounding threats to both competitiveness and quality of life. Rising energy costs also increasingly squeeze residents and businesses.

Specific industries also face particular hurdles. Heat exposure and air quality impacts of rising temperatures, drought, and wildfire smoke and ash threaten both worker safety and the region’s agricultural output. Monterey County alone saw a six percent decline in farm output in 2023 largely attributable to extreme weather events, according to the county’s farm bureau.²³ Event cancellations, closures of major routes, and other impacts caused by extreme weather also exert considerable pressure on the region’s hospitality and tourism industry, threatening the long-term sustainability of jobs and operations in these areas. Countering environmental impacts, therefore, is key to ensuring ongoing economic growth, as well as human health and conservation of the natural environment.

²³ County of Monterey, “Together We Rise”, Crop and Livestock Report, July 2024, <https://www.countyofmonterey.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/132827/638560513051670000>.



Target Sector Strategies

Improving the number of quality jobs and bolstering access to those opportunities is critical to supporting helping more Central Coast residents to thrive.

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.

Strategies for some of the region's largest industries center on enhancing the quality of existing jobs and improving pathways to better jobs than are currently available.

Boosting Quality Job Creation

Sector Definition and Prioritization

The Central Coast shows strengths in two competitive, connected, and broad-yet-bounded categories—**Precision Manufacturing** and **Advanced Business Services**—primed to create more quality jobs accessible to a wide range of residents with different levels of skills and credentials, including those with less than a bachelor's degree.

These industries both meet four foundational filters for competitiveness and job quality, and have been validated as regional economic development opportunities through engagement with industry, intermediaries, and innovation institutions.²⁴ They also have potential to promote greater economic diversification and resilience in the region; because these industries concentrate quality jobs, growth will balance the region's weighting in agriculture and hospitality and tourism sectors offering relatively few family-sustaining employment opportunities.²⁵ With targeted workforce pathways, jobs will also offer new opportunities for workers that may be displaced by the impending closure of Diablo Canyon Power Plant (expected to impact at least 3,000 workers), the decommissioning of oil and gas activity in Uplift's

southern sub-region, and the ongoing impacts of the 1990s shuttering of Fort Ord in Monterey County.

Additionally, these industries are tied to major areas of global economic and geopolitical significance (e.g., semiconductors) and consistent with recent federal place-based industrial policy to invest in high-tech industries, reshoring of supply chains, American manufacturing, and green jobs. Alignment with the objectives of the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, Inflation Reduction Act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and related legacy federal programs (e.g., initiatives of the Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and Interior) positions the region to access catalytic funding beyond California Jobs First implementation grants to advance quality job creation and access in these areas. The region has already pursued related applications to the National Science Foundation's Innovation Engines program and the Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Regional Challenge.

²⁴ As articulated in *Regional Plan Part I* (and accompanying *databook*), Uplift identified an initial set of priority "opportunity industry" sectors for exploration and refinement. These categories considered criteria like existing strengths in regional value-chain relationships and market directions, workforce capabilities and pipelines, innovation disciplines, and unique infrastructure. The analysis ranged from a new machine-learning model finding regional commercial relationships across traditional industry verticals to themes from diverse stakeholder interviews and community engagement. They also met four foundational filters reflecting both California Jobs First values and inclusive economic development leading practice. Industry clusters analysis applied an initial filter prioritization: (1) The sector can expand access to quality jobs because it either concentrates quality jobs for a) all workers, or b) for mid-skilled workers with some college, certificate, or associate's degree; (2) The sector is tradable and has a high-growth multiplier, meaning each job created spurs several others in the economy; (3) The sector is either a clear specialization in the region or emerging as growing faster locally than nationwide; (4) The sector can continue to be competitive given environmental standards and advances California Jobs First's goals of promoting a transition to a low-carbon economy (e.g., oil and gas-based industries are excluded; environmental impact of other industries can be remediated to varying degrees).

²⁵ 6.4 percent of the region's hospitality jobs and 11 percent of the region's agriculture jobs count as quality jobs, according to analysis conducted for *Regional Plan Part I*. Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample.

Precision Manufacturing refers to the production of goods manufactured to extremely high accuracy, consistency, and reliability; this category is bound by “how” products are made. Representative subsector activity in the region includes instruments, sensors, and commercial and industrial equipment. These goods are typically high-value, often produced in low-volume and supported by nearby research and development and innovation activities. Together with select subsectors of chemicals (e.g., pharmaceuticals, plastics) and metalworking manufacturing, precision manufacturing accounts for just under \$15 billion (or 14.7 percent) of the region’s exports and 34,400 jobs.²⁶ Precision manufacturing strengths exist throughout the region, with about 1,250 total establishments (averaging 27 jobs per establishment).²⁷ On average, these sectors see a multiplier effect of 1.4, meaning each new job results in an additional 1.4 jobs in the region, though with variability by subsector.²⁸ Related aerospace equipment manufacturing activity accounts for a further \$1.3 billion (or 1.3 percent) of regional exports and 2,600 jobs, with a multiplier of 2.07.

Average earnings for all jobs (across skill and experience levels) in precision manufacturing subsectors (plus select chemicals and metalworking subsectors) exceed \$121,000 with some variability by industry area. Pharmaceuticals and electronic device manufacturing provide the highest average earnings compared to automotive and plastics manufacturing as the lowest. In the aggregate, 50 percent of jobs (or about 17,000 positions) in identified manufacturing subsectors

qualify as “opportunity jobs.”²⁹ 33 percent of jobs (or about 11,500 positions) meet standards for “quality” jobs, meaning they pay a livable wage, offer employer-sponsored health insurance, and provide stability in retaining a quality job over the next decade.³⁰ About 28 percent of these quality jobs are held by workers without a college degree. An additional 16 percent of jobs (or about 5,600 positions) count as “promising jobs,” meaning they provide a pathway to a quality job within a decade. By comparison, 37 percent of all private-sector jobs on the Central Coast meet opportunity job criteria.³¹ Related aerospace equipment manufacturing activity sees 67 percent of jobs meeting opportunity jobs standards. 55 percent of these aerospace jobs count as quality jobs, with about 17 percent of those quality jobs held by workers without a college degree. 12 percent of aerospace jobs qualify as promising jobs.

²⁶ Relevant NAICS categories include instrumentation, microelectronics, electronic device, irradiation apparatus, specialized equipment, and automotive manufacturing (precision manufacturing); pharmaceuticals, other chemicals, and plastics manufacturing (chemical manufacturing); and metalworking manufacturing. Source: Brookings/Cities GPS analysis.

²⁷ Brookings/Cities GPS analysis.

²⁸ Subsectors showing higher multipliers include electronic device manufacturing and pharmaceuticals manufacturing.

²⁹ Opportunity jobs refers to the combined total of “quality” and “promising” jobs.

³⁰ For more on Uplift’s definition and assessment of job quality, see Annex 1: Glossary.

³¹ Brookings / Cities GPS analysis.

Advanced Business Services centers on tech-oriented activities like software development and custom computing design, with prominence in the Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz areas.³² This activity accounts for about \$8.7 billion (or 8.6 percent) of regional exports and about 61,000 (or 7.3 percent) regional jobs, across over 7,000 regional establishments (averaging 8.6 jobs per establishment). On average, these sectors see a job multiplier of 1.8.

Average earnings for all jobs in advanced business services subsectors (across skill and experience levels) are \$235,984, with 59 percent of jobs counting as opportunity jobs. 41 percent of advanced business services jobs count as quality jobs, with about 25 percent of those held by workers without a college degree.³³ 19 percent of advanced business services jobs qualify as promising jobs.

The presence of Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services can be described as converging to strengths in the “Autonomous Systems” Value-Chain, meaning high-value, technically advanced, and exact products that can function independently in a range of challenging environments (see Figure 10).³⁴ These strengths collectively leverage distinctive assets at landmark research and innovation institutions (e.g., UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, Cal Poly, research facilities located at Naval Base Ventura County, and the Naval Postgraduate School). They also utilize geographic assets, such as the Northern counties’ proximity to Silicon Valley.

Figure 10: Convergence of Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services into the Autonomous Systems Value Chain

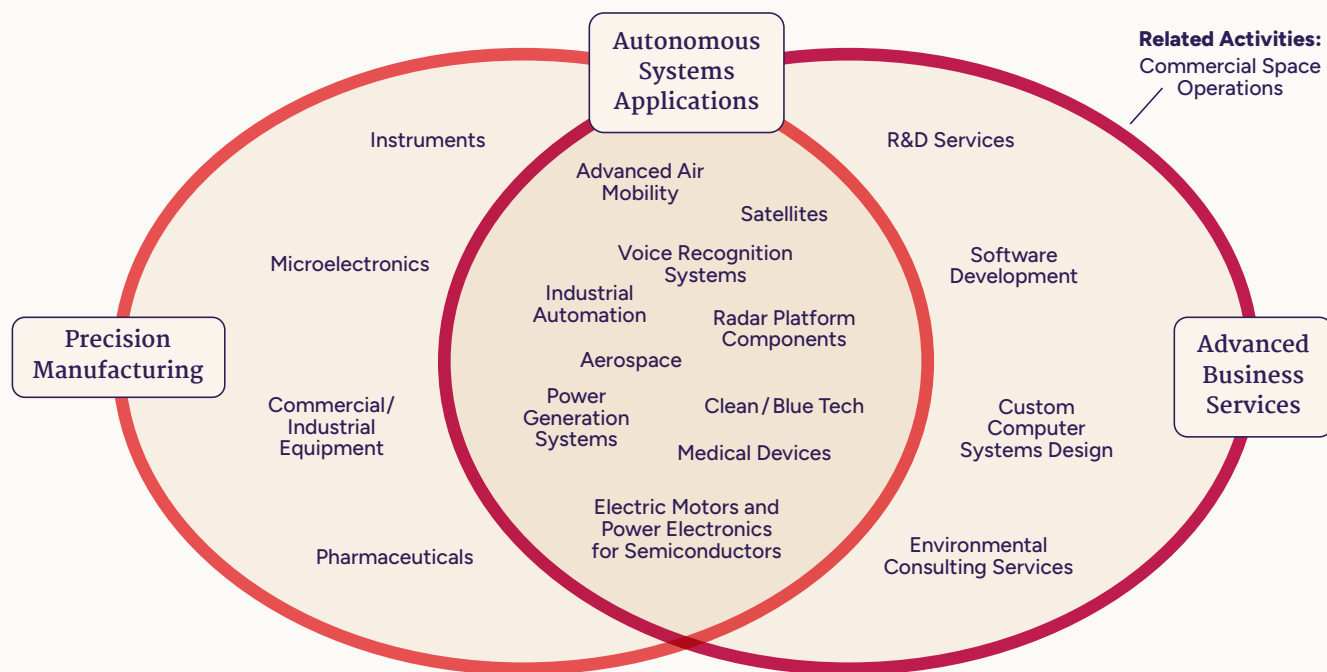


Figure 10: Convergence of Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services into the Autonomous Systems Value Chain. Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis

³² Relevant NAICS categories include finance, computer systems design, other technical consulting services, headquarters, engineering and design services, insurance, arts and media, and research and development services.

³³ Brookings / Cities GPS analysis.

³⁴ Researchers at MIT *have described* the growing opportunity around autonomous systems as such: “As society relies more and more on uncrewed air, space, and ground systems to carry out complex missions with little oversight, the need for trusted, verifiable, self-learning autonomous systems and high-integrity algorithms has grown tremendously. Autonomy focuses on developing embodied intelligent systems, ranging from autonomous drones to self-driving cars and robots, that can physically operate in complex environments with minimal human supervision. Decision-making employs models and algorithms that make predictions about physical and environmental phenomena. Moreover, many of these algorithms are data-driven: autonomous systems need the ability to acquire data about their environments and adapt or refine their behavior in real-time.”

Sector Applications

Aerospace: The Central Coast shows strength in aerospace manufacturing encompassing products such as satellites, aircraft engine and engine parts, space vehicles, and other measuring and controlling devices. Representative firms include both local small and mid-sized firms (e.g., Umbra and Redwire in Santa Barbara County) and large national operators and contractors. This activity is enhanced by the presence of unique infrastructure not replicable elsewhere in California or nationally, serving as a cornerstone for growing space operations (see box on “Complementary Strength: Space Operations”). Ventura County also provides complementary aerial technology testing operations at Naval Base Ventura County. A 2021 aerospace-focused application to the Economic Development Administration’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge, followed by a 2022 application to the National Science Foundation’s Innovation Engines program, was the impetus for the initial organizing of Uplift.

COMPLEMENTARY STRENGTH: SPACE OPERATIONS

Alongside aerospace manufacturing, the Northern portion of Santa Barbara County is home to growing space operations anchored by Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB). The facility is the nation’s second busiest spaceport and represents a distinctive vertical launch capability in the State of California. VSFB has historically hosted space launch and testing activities and today hosts a growing number of launches from commercial entities such as SpaceX, Firefly Aerospace, and United Launch Alliance. A 2020 Memorandum of Understanding between the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development, VSFB, REACH, Santa Barbara County, and other education and local government institutions codifies continued buildout of this national asset and its operations as a regional and state economic development priority.

In addition to VSFB, underutilized public and private airport infrastructure elsewhere in the Central Coast provides a basis for buildout of additional commercial testing and launch facilities. For instance, Paso Robles has initiated plans to develop horizontal launch capability in Northern San Luis Obispo County.



Advanced Air Mobility (Manned and Unmanned):

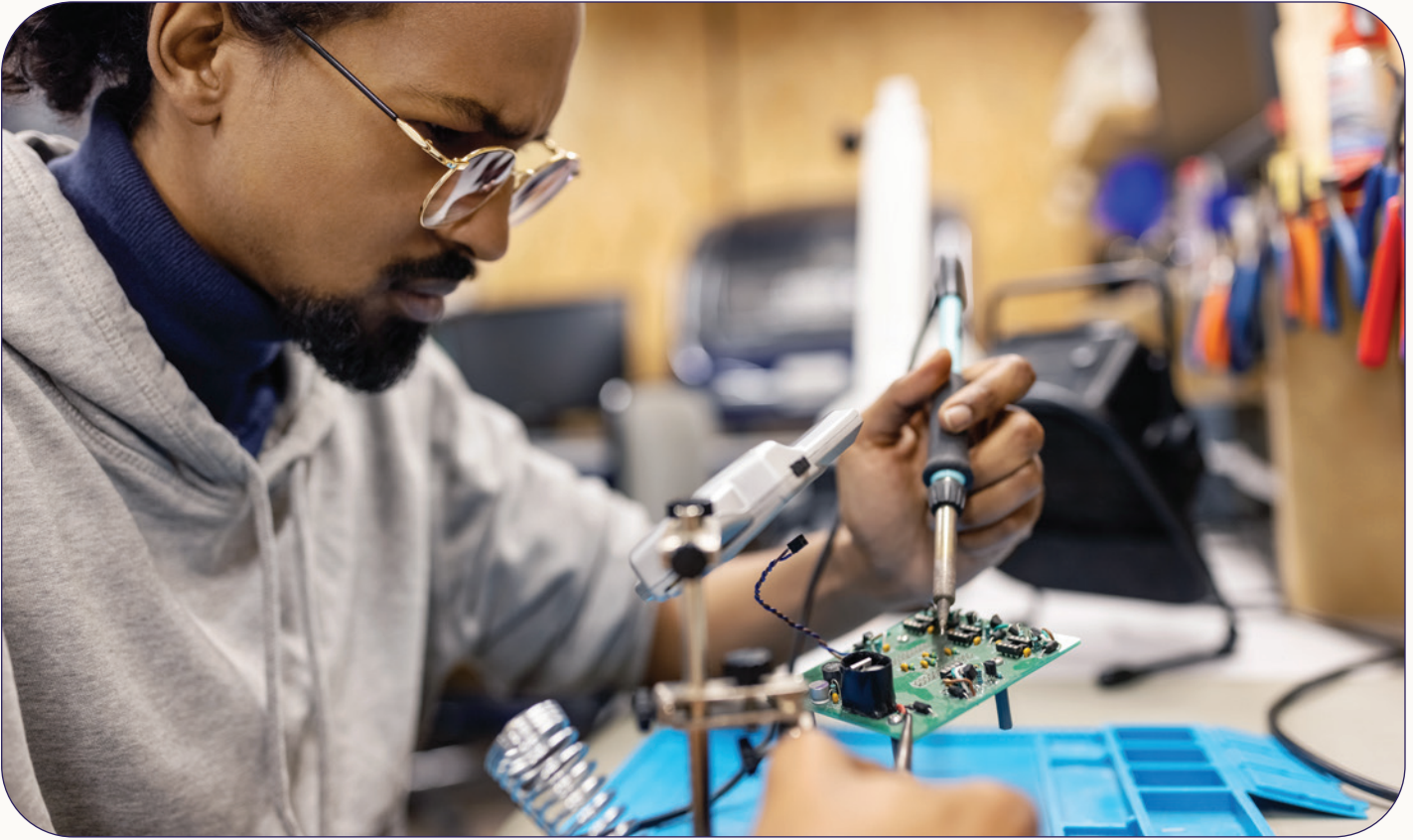
The region hosts distinctive capabilities in the prototyping, testing, and manufacturing of both manned and unmanned advanced air mobility vehicles, such as electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft (eVTOL), passenger transportation aircraft, and drones. Incumbents include market-leaders in manned vehicles and aircraft such as Joby Aviation (headquartered in Santa Cruz), ZeroAvia (headquartered in Hollister), Archer Aviation (based in San Jose, with facilities on the Central Coast), Wisk Aero (based in San Jose, with testing facilities on the Central Coast), and Parallel Flight (located in Santa Cruz). Additional firms focused on unmanned aircraft systems and drone technologies include Inspired Flight, ESAero, Zone 5, and Edge Autonomy (all located in San Luis Obispo) and AeroVironment (with a major footprint in Ventura County). Drone applications range from marine science to defense, agriculture, and infrastructure inspection. In all, this concentration of leading companies provides a strong value proposition for additional firms to locate in the region, positioning the Central Coast as a preeminent site to capture meaningful benefit from a global market estimated to reach \$115 billion annually by 2035, employing 280,000 workers in high-paying jobs.³⁵

Advanced air mobility activity leverages the region's autonomous systems strengths, relatively open airspace given its rural and coastal geography, general aviation airports in Marina, Watsonville, Salinas, and Hollister for testing, and proximity to Silicon Valley innovation activity. Jobs serving the specialization span—or are expected to soon span—technology services positions analyzing data gathered from vehicle sensors, in addition to manufacturing. The region is also home to the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit Lemoore Detachment (DET) Point Mugu, located at Naval Base Ventura County, which supports the Navy's future fleet of Northrop Grumman MQ-4C Triton long-range unmanned aerial systems. Testing facilities are also present at Camp Roberts and Fort Hunter Liggett in Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties.

Considerable regional organizing is already underway to accelerate advanced air mobility growth, including applications to the National Science Foundation's Innovation Engine program and the Economic Development Administration's Tech Hubs program. Examples of related collaboratives include the UC Santa Cruz Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS) Initiative for Drone Education and Research (CIDER); the CITRIS Aviation Initiative; the Monterey Drone Automation, Robotics, and Technology (DART) initiative; and the Monterey Bay Tech Hub led by Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, UC Santa Cruz, and DART (independent of a federal award). Priorities include substantial workforce development investments to ensure a local talent pipeline (including a planned workforce hub at Marina airport driven by industry-informed curricula, and expanding on initial efforts such as a Joby Aviation, CSU-Monterey Bay, DART, and Irvine Foundation-supported apprenticeship program), and development of testing, charging, and point-to-point passenger "vertiport" transportation infrastructure at regional airports in Marina, Watsonville, Salinas, and Hollister.³⁶ While current activity is largely focused on electric aircraft, development of hydrogen-fueled and hybrid-fueled passenger and cargo aircraft is also underway and a priority for regional leads. In July, for instance, Joby Aviation completed a 523-mile test flight of a combined hydrogen-electric aircraft in the region.

³⁵ Aijaz Hussain and David Silver, "Advanced air mobility: Can the United States afford to lose the race?" Deloitte Insights, 2021, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/aerospace-defense/advanced-air-mobility.html>.

³⁶ Vertiports are airports supporting vertical aircraft takeoff and landing.



Microelectronics—Areas such as semiconductor components, radio, satellite, and other communications platforms, sensors, power generation systems, and medical devices are specialized in the Central Coast. UC Santa Barbara hosts or has played a leading role in supporting substantial assets in microelectronics, including the university’s Nanotech Lab, Materials Research Lab, and Quantum Foundry, and Google Quantum’s regional presence. Many of the region’s semiconductor supply chain firms (e.g., Transphorm, Kyocera SLD, Aeluma) are also located in Goleta, proximate to the UC Santa Barbara campus, with others headquartered in Ventura County (e.g., Teledyne) and San Luis Obispo County (e.g., Trust Automation). Organizing around a 2023 Economic Development Administration Tech Hubs application suggested that the region is positioned with additional investment for growth in advanced semiconductors around four federal key technical areas: quantum technology, advanced communications technology, advanced materials, and advanced energy efficiency technology. These areas, each of which have market potential in the billions over the next decade, have applications in areas including high-frequency and high-power electronics, radar, power conversion, and 6G technology.³⁷ Other regional microelectronics capabilities and leaders include assets tied to CITRIS and Baskin School of Engineering at UC Santa Cruz, Semtech (based in Ventura County developing globally-leading sensor technologies for internet of things devices, and Ambient Photonics (in Santa Cruz). The sizable increase in federal funding for domestic semiconductor production via the CHIPS and Science Act provides a further catalyst for growth in this area in the years to come.

³⁷ California Central Coast Regional Ecosystem for Advanced Technology Enabling Semiconductors (California CREATES), Application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration Tech Hubs Program, 2023.

Agriculture Technology (AgTech)³⁸—The Central Coast boasts assets and existing market activity in the development and testing of agriculture technology innovations poised to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural production across California and the world. These strengths intertwine with advanced air mobility and microelectronics in the application of drones, sensors, and robotics to farming. Anchors of the region’s AgTech specialization include the Western Growers Association (promoting innovation, adoption, and entrepreneurship, including via its Center for Innovation and Technology), Hartnell College (hosting an Agricultural Business and Technology Institute and an Alisal-based Center for Advanced Technology supported by market leaders including Taylor Farms and Driscoll’s), UC Santa Cruz, and firms such as AgTech Insight. Indicative of its position in global AgTech innovation, the Salinas Valley area in Monterey County regularly hosts conferences such as the International Forum for Robotic Agriculture, the Salinas Biological Summit, and the AgTechX Ed Summit. The San Luis Obispo area is also home to related assets, such as Cal Poly’s Strawberry Center and other agriculture, AgTech, and plant sciences programs, plus several recent market entrants (e.g., Hortau, TRIC Robotics). Like other autonomous systems specializations, AgTech is the focus of major federal investment (spanning the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Energy), offering further avenues to support industry development.

Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals—Biotechnology and pharmaceutical assets include university innovation and firm activity. For instance, UC Santa Cruz boasts strengths in drug discovery, genomics, and RNA biology strengths, plus involvement with the broader University of California Drug Discovery Consortium and UC Berkeley-based California Institute for Quantitative Biosciences.

Market-leader Amgen is headquartered in Thousand Oaks, while other parts of the region also see market presence (e.g., Santa Cruz operations of Gilead Sciences and San Luis Obispo-based Promega). While Amgen has downsized its Ventura presence over the last decade, it remains an economic and innovation anchor. In addition, regional efforts such as the BioScience Alliance have succeeded in recent years in promoting spin-outs and adjacent entrepreneurial activity off Amgen’s historically-insular presence. These assets provide a foundation for ongoing industry activity.

Blue Technology (Blue Tech)—Autonomous systems strengths, university and federal installation innovation assets, and the Central Coast’s physical attributes all point to potential growth opportunities in blue technology devices, systems, and platforms (e.g., sensors). Review of peer-reviewed articles and patents from regional universities suggests leading strengths in marine biology, oceanography, and related fields. Federal assets, such as research labs at Naval Base Ventura County and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, also register related strengths. Central Coast-based institutions and initiatives, such as Moss Landing Marine Labs, Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, the Center for the Blue Economy at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the Cal Poly Center for Coastal Marine Sciences, and the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara’s Ocean Collective effort, further evidence collective action to advance the region’s assets and economic potential. However, strategy development surfaced relatively few existing firms and barriers to near-term commercialization of relevant technologies, such as the need for validation of early-stage technology. This specialization, therefore, likely requires additional industry development via cluster-building intermediary functions in advance of substantial job creation.

³⁸ Please reference the Annex 1: Glossary for a definition of AgTech.

Overarching Needs, Considerations, and Existing Assets

GEOGRAPHIC SCALE

The Central Coast faces intrinsic issues related to the geographic scale of the region. While totaling roughly 2.3 million residents, the region's status as a dispersed set of small to mid-sized economic hubs spread across hundreds of miles means that many parts of the region do not reach the level of population or economic scale typically required to organically enable many ecosystem supports. Specifically, these include (but are not limited to) access to talent, capital, and other entrepreneurial building blocks, as well as the ability to organize coalitions of leading companies, universities and community colleges, and other core sector actors.

INDUSTRIAL COMPOSITION

Related to the region's geographic scale, its industries are dominated by small and mid-sized companies; precision manufacturing firms in the region have an average of 27.3 jobs per establishment, while advanced business services firms claim an average of 8.6 jobs per company.³⁹ These smaller and mid-sized firms tend to have lower internal capacity to invest in talent, innovation, and product and process improvements—and therefore to compete in the global economy. They may also overlook opportunities for scale-up and expansion into new domestic and global markets and/or fail to address critical needs around supply chain, customer diversification, and succession planning. These dynamics point to the need to organize industry and provide various forms of technical assistance; efforts already underway in the region include engagement of Ventura manufacturers through the Ventura County Industry Council and organizing of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo employers by REACH to identify and address talent needs.



³⁹ Brookings/Cities GPS analysis.

TALENT ACCESS AND PIPELINES

Talent availability was raised by employers and intermediaries as a primary barrier to firm growth. Manufacturing firms notably cited unmet demand for hands-on technicians with the specific skills and attention required to assemble highly intricate products, sometimes in specialized, constrained locations (e.g., clean rooms). Engineering talent with higher levels of education—spanning physical/mechanical and software functions—is also a key gap. Meanwhile, intermediary and community input also raised the need to improve uptake of basic digital skills to improve overall job readiness among disinvested populations; though not within the scope of “advanced business services,” this priority is important to serving broader inclusion-focused goals. Underlying many of these gaps is the region’s high cost of living and housing shortage, eroding the wages of all employed and making it difficult for firms to attract workers (when local talent is not available).

Local outreach and leading practices suggest that emphasis should be placed on improving coordination and reducing fragmentation within regional education and workforce systems to maximize responsiveness and output. In tandem, focus should be directed to intentional efforts to improve equity and access to talent programs (e.g., child care assistance, fee waivers, and scheduling classes at times when existing workers can attend). The region can also work with employers to adopt leading practices for job quality, talent recruitment, and retention that reduce turnover and broaden the pool of available talent.

The region boasts a baseline of initiatives that could be scaled and leveraged. Recently established or under-development offerings at the region’s universities, community colleges, and TK-12 systems include:

- Advanced manufacturing apprenticeship program offered by CSU-Monterey Bay, Monterey DART, and Joby Aviation with support from the Irvine Foundation
- Joby-led pilot training academy
- Advanced air mobility career and technical education pathway developed by Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Joby Aviation, UC Santa Cruz, and DART
- Aircraft maintenance technician program developed by Cuesta College and ACI Jet
- Central Coast Partnership for Regional Industry-focused Micro/Nanotechnology Education (CC-PRIME) program led by Santa Barbara City College, UC Santa Barbara, and Allan Hancock College
- Industry-driven advanced air mobility curriculum to be offered by Hartnell, Gavilan, Cabrillo, and Monterey Peninsula Colleges
- STEM internship program targeting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students at Monterey Peninsula College

Additional providers of shorter-term trainings, TK-12 exposure, and more basic skills include workforce development boards and County Offices of Education throughout the Central Coast, iINNOVATE and SLO Partners (San Luis Obispo), the Idea Center/STEMbassadors (Ventura), and Hartnell College STEM exposure activities, DigitalNEST, and Loaves, Fishes, and Computers (Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito). In Ventura County, EDC has developed a three-part, no-cost Digital Upskilling Initiative connecting adults with basic computer skills, providing workers with CompTIA and GBL Systems certifications. Similarly, WEV offers training for small business owners in e-commerce and digital marketing tools.

TECH TRANSFER AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Strategy development activities suggest that the region's baseline of tech transfer and commercialization programming could be bolstered to further leverage the region's innovation assets and maximize their economic impact. This includes expanding university tech transfer offices to enable greater focus on strategic activity alongside day-to-day activities and filling gaps in specialized technical, business, and commercialization talent. Related challenges include lack of visibility and marketing of the full suite of the region's intellectual property in priority areas to those who could take it to market, as well as gaps in funding available to validate and de-risk large swaths of university intellectual property catalogs.

Engagement also suggests potential to bolster tech transfer and commercialization activities serving regional defense installations in Ventura and Monterey Counties.⁴⁰ Current activities include NavalX Tech Bridges (Department of Defense (DOD)-led efforts to improve external engagement and tech transfer) hosted in Monterey and Ventura Counties, and FATHOMWERX, a 60,000 square foot innovation hub located at Naval Base Ventura County and the Port of Hueneme with millions of dollars of testing equipment, including a metal 3-D printer, an indoor flying cage to test unmanned aerial systems, virtual reality equipment, and an underwater testing facility. Because a primary mission of NavalX Tech Bridges is to "spin-in" intellectual property (sourcing external collaborations that advance DOD needs), expanded efforts should focus on maximizing the value of "spin-out" activity (supporting a locally based firm ecosystem utilizing DOD technologies).

⁴⁰ Naval Base Ventura County hosts three labs, while Monterey County is home to the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). Specific strengths at the institutions relate directly to identified regional economic opportunities. For instance, Naval Base Ventura County concentrates naval research and testing related to autonomous systems and energy. It is also home to the *Advanced Naval Technology Exercise Coastal Trident*, a "venue to support high velocity learning and accelerate development, evaluation, and implementation of technologies." The Naval Postgraduate School's strengths include intellectual property related to the blue economy and clean tech. NPS also boasts high-value testing infrastructure (i.e., a Mach 5 wind tunnel) that could be made accessible for commercial use.

HIGH-GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORTS

Owing to the region's population, scale, and distance between economic nodes, the Central Coast faces numerous challenges to building a high-growth entrepreneurial ecosystem consisting of networked innovators, investors, and other talent continually making connections, referrals, and investments that support the ongoing startup and success of new ventures. Impacts are seen, for instance, in access to capital and sophisticated acceleration services (e.g., cohort-based, time-limited, and in-person programming). The relatively small number of new firms in each area can also be a barrier to creating the density for effective service delivery, peer interactions, experienced entrepreneurs in aligned sectors, and ultimately a vibrant ecosystem. Existing organizations and initiatives such as Matter Labs (in Ventura), Santa Cruz Works, Hawk Tower (a new venture capital fund based in Monterey, focused on the Central Coast and Central Valley), CSU-Monterey Bay's Institute for Innovation and Economic Development, Western Growers Association, SVG Ventures THRIVE (in San Jose), the planned Naval Innovation Center in Monterey, Cal Poly's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (with recently-announced plans for expansion in downtown San Luis Obispo), the Entrepreneurship and Small Business Institute at California State University Channel Islands and SBDCs anchored at EDC, Cal Poly, Monterey County Business Council, and Cabrillo College provide a foundation for expanded efforts.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Both general and industry-specific infrastructure issues weigh on competitiveness. Access to electricity, including reliability and constancy of service, are reported to impede operations and potential growth in some areas, particularly in highly sensitive precision manufacturing sub-industries. Power and broadband access are particularly issues in rural areas, such as San Benito County and south Monterey County. Deployment of hydrogen fueling and electric charging infrastructure is also required to realize goals for reducing the environmental impact of industry activities.

Specialized infrastructure assets are important to bolster the region's competitiveness in specific industry applications. These encompass assets, potentially including and not limited to):

- Buildout of advanced air mobility facilities at Salinas, Marina, Watsonville, and Hollister airports (including airspace management capacity and the planned "MBEST" workforce training center and industry-informed curriculum)
- "Farm of the future" testing and demonstration for AgTech
- A semiconductor shared resource prototyping facility in Santa Barbara to enable firm scale-up and transition to volume manufacturing
- Creation of a Mission Development Zone at Vandenberg SFB to enable co-located commercial and academic activities

These and related efforts are supported through the Monterey Bay Tech Hub, the Strada Verde Innovation Park development in San Benito, HawkTower's "The Farm" project in Monterey, Cal Poly's technology park expansion in San Luis Obispo, and the 2020 Memorandum of Understanding between GO-Biz, REACH, and other institutions supporting infrastructure buildout at VSFB. Other identified or potential needs include publicly accessible wet lab space and maker spaces for manufacturing prototyping in the Central Coast's northern sub-region.



Alignment with Job Quality and Access, Equity, and Climate

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Concentration of quality jobs, including at higher than average rates for workers without a bachelor's degree, was a core criterion for prioritizing sector strengths in precision manufacturing, advanced business services, and autonomous systems applications (see Sector Definition and Prioritization). Growth of these jobs will boost the number of quality jobs in the region. Intentional workforce development strategies to improve access for disinvested communities and invest in employer best practices for talent recruitment and retention—as outlined in this document—will be crucial to achieving equity goals.

EQUITY

Overwhelming input from Uplift's community engagement emphasized the imperative to make more quality jobs available and accessible to residents, particularly those from disinvested communities. Targeted workforce development efforts, marketed and delivered in partnership with trusted intermediaries and community based and faith-based organizations, will be critical for promoting disinvested groups' awareness of and benefit from training opportunities and ultimate access to jobs. This includes directly promoting upskilling

and transitions from lower-paying industries and/or areas positioned for potential displacement (e.g., agriculture, with the adoption of AgTech) to priority sectors. Efforts by the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Chamber, education and workforce providers, and several regional firms to form an Advanced Manufacturing Upskilling Network are emblematic of this approach. Longer-term science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) awareness campaigns, based in the TK-12 system and delivered in concert with community partners, are also crucial. All efforts must be intentional about barriers such as language access and literacy.

Alongside education and training, additional investments (outlined elsewhere in this strategy report) are necessary to ensure that better job opportunities translate into higher quality of life. These include improved access to affordable child care and transportation. **Housing affordability is also a particularly critical issue; without expanding the region's supply of housing matching worker income levels, housing prices promise to further erode wages and threaten residents' ability to thrive on the Central Coast.**





CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

All sectors prioritized in this strategy passed a baseline filter for competitiveness given environmental standards and California Jobs First's goals of promoting a transition to a climate resilient, carbon-neutral economy. This consisted of excluding oil and gas-based industries from industry priorities, recognizing that the environmental impact of other industries can be remediated to varying degrees.

Analysis of regional industry environmental impacts, such as greenhouse gas emissions, critical and hazardous air emissions, point source releases to ground and water, and land use, found that utilities, agriculture, mining, and logistics account for the vast majority of impacts across the region.⁴¹ Manufacturing does register more sizable impacts around commercial hazardous waste, accounting for most impacts in all counties; however these are regulated from creation to safe disposal under the State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control (CA DTSC) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enforcement, rather than generating unmitigated releases.⁴² Industry-related public health concerns identified by research and community engagement primarily center on the agriculture industry (e.g., outdoor working conditions, exposure to pesticides), rather than target sectors.

Manufacturing activity generally tends to vary in environmental impact, with heavier materials production (e.g., steel, cement), certain subsectors of chemical manufacturing, and processes requiring significant water and electricity usage to manipulate raw materials typically ranking as the most energy and hazardous emissions intensive. These heavier manufacturing activities are less competitive in the Central Coast than the precision manufacturing subsectors featured in this report.

Advanced business services jobs are typically office jobs, with low emissions arising largely from commuting and building energy usage. Increasing remote work activity, electric vehicle usage, and application of renewable energy sources is likely to reduce these impacts.

Notably, beyond limiting harm, multiple dimensions of the region's precision manufacturing, advanced business services, and autonomous systems strengths affirmatively advance environmental solutions. This includes the development of hydrogen-fueled aircraft and advanced air mobility technologies that will reduce the impact of air transportation on climate change, application of drones to wildfire fighting and forest management, and clean and blue tech innovations potentially spanning ocean buoys and biofuels.

⁴¹ Analysis of U.S. EPA data and IMPLAN regional industry input-output models, presented in *Regional Plan Part I*.

⁴² Analysis of U.S. EPA data and IMPLAN regional industry input-output models, presented in *Regional Plan Part I*.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development efforts are critical to the success of priority sectors, with focused attention to the region’s Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), underserved, and disinvested communities to meet Uplift and California Jobs First objectives to improve equity. Targeted workforce pathways will be imperative to improve access to job opportunities not requiring a bachelor’s degree, such as manufacturing technician roles. Analysis suggests that technical knowledge and skills, such as installation, repairing, equipment maintenance and selection, programming, operations analysis, technology design, and operation and control are among the most important human capital attributes of quality mid-skill jobs in the region.⁴³

New collaborative mechanisms are likely required given the wide array of entities involved (e.g., industry, education, workforce, labor, and community) in building both a near-term and long-term inclusive talent pipeline. Leading practice models such as “industry-workforce partnerships” or “talent-industry exchanges” that convene actors around a central table may be warranted, organized at the sub-regional scale for efficiency. Such approaches also enable capacity for speedier response to skill demand shifts and the need for potential refresher trainings sparked by macro trends, such as the adoption of artificial intelligence and automation.

Employer leadership in partnering with education and workforce leads to design curricula, deliver trainings, and adapt internal talent recruitment and retention policies is essential to success. Employers should engage throughout the process of identifying specific skill needs, shaping curricula, contributing instructors and equipment, hosting interns and apprentices, and ultimately recruiting for permanent roles. Further investments in internal

human resources practices, such as skills-based hiring, clearer pathways for internal mobility, and support for additional training or education, can both improve recruitment and retention, and promote equity goals. Action taken by national employers in recent years through initiatives such as UpSkill America to work collaboratively to invest in worker mobility is a model for further efforts on the Central Coast.

The region’s community colleges and universities (many of whom are Hispanic-serving, Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-serving, and minority-serving institutions) have a critical role to play in designing and executing practical, industry-informed programs that can connect graduates to immediate job opportunities. Recent industry-community college partnerships, such as ACI Jet and Cuesta College’s aircraft maintenance technician program, Santa Barbara City College, UC Santa Barbara, and Allan Hancock College collaboration on nanotech fabrication training, Hartnell College’s partnership with CSU Monterey Bay and Western Growers for AgTech, and coordination between Strada Verde Innovation Park developers in San Benito and Gavilan College to establish a mobility career pathway program are emblematic of required approaches.

In addition, shorter-term trainings, such as bootcamps and apprenticeships, should be prioritized to enable faster entry to higher-quality jobs, including for displaced workers and for incumbent workers moving into more senior roles. These offerings can be found in-person at local institutions or through credible online providers, such as EDC’s Digital Upskilling Initiative and the national technology training organization Per Scholas; online programs may offer more flexibility for those caring for children and other family members, who lack

⁴³ Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of O*NET data, American Community Survey public-use microdata sample 1-year estimates, and Lightcast estimates, presented in Uplift Central Coast Regional Plan Part I *Databook*.

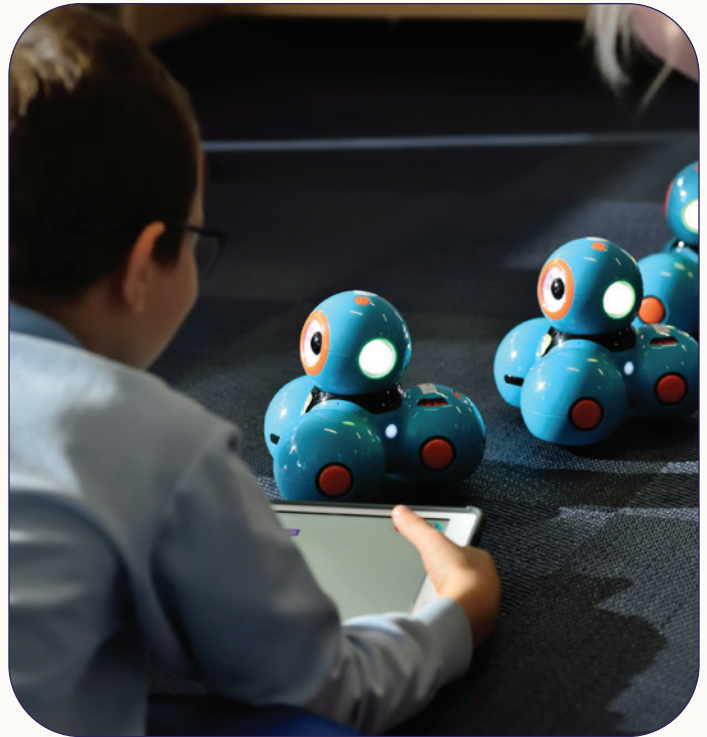
reliable transportation, or who have existing jobs. Better marketing of Employment Training Panel (ETP) and other workforce system resources can also support incumbent worker upskilling. Community based organization partnerships and attention to barriers (e.g., language access, digital skills) should be prioritized across the board to ensure equitable outcomes.

In tandem with near-term workforce development, the Central Coast must also prioritize building a more diverse locally grown high-skill STEM workforce. TK-12 exposure models, such as the San Luis Coastal Education Foundation's iNOVATE program and STEM engagement at Bob Hoover Academy in Salinas and the IDEA Center in Ventura, provide models. The region's K-16 Collaborative (focused on healthcare in the northern sub-region and engineering or computing and STEM in the southern sub-region) and County Offices of Education are also positioned to function as core partners.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE STRATEGIES

The State of California is the nation's leading manufacturing state and is synonymous with the global technology industry. Continuing to advance these strengths are core objectives of State economic development. Manufacturing, aerospace and defense, semiconductors and microelectronics, AgTech (within agriculture and AgTech), high tech, biotech, and climate and clean energy are all listed as priorities by the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). Firms in these areas are routinely awarded incentives under the state's signature California Competes Tax Credit, as well as other tax exemptions and exclusions.

These areas have also been the focus of a range of targeted State initiatives and programs. For instance, together with the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (OSBA), GO-Biz leads a "Made in California" initiative to support California manufacturers and elevate California-produced products. In 2022, GO-Biz launched a Space Industry Task Force to advance the state's aerospace economy. OSBA has also recognized related regional intermediaries, such as FATHOMWERX, through its Inclusive Innovation Hub program.



Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services Strategies

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.

Tactics

- Explore the potential to scale existing employer-driven solutions to deliver greater volume and/or serve other parts of the region.
 - Develop new short-term training programs (e.g., bootcamps, apprenticeships, vocational programming) to address specific industry needs (such as manufacturing technicians), working with businesses to develop industry-informed curriculum. These may be provided by regional institutions and/or through credible online platforms.
 - Expand career and technical education (CTE) targeting specific specializations.
 - Promote upskilling and career transitions from lower-paying industries and/or areas positioned for potential displacement (e.g., agriculture, with the adoption of AgTech) to priority sectors.
 - Improve awareness and utilization of incumbent worker training resources (e.g., Employment Training Panel funds) to facilitate greater career mobility within companies.
 - Promote employer adoption of leading practices to increase mobility for front-line and entry-level workers, such as support for certificate and degree attainment. Improve worker awareness of such opportunities through career counselors and other providers.
 - Partner with community based organizations to develop and/or verify that trainings are culturally responsive and reflect lived experiences.
- Provide dedicated supports to address access barriers (e.g., employer-sponsored housing, childcare, language, transportation, and food security).
 - Improve overall regional workforce proficiency in digital skills, positioning incumbent workers for potential upskilling opportunities.

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

Advance a more diverse 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. This strategy primarily implicates education, workforce, and community leads in program delivery, in partnership with employers and economic development intermediaries.

Tactics:

- Launch longer-term campaign(s), based in the TK-12 system, to improve awareness of manufacturing and other science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers among youth, particularly in disinvested communities. Such efforts may be focused generally on STEM and/or on specific industry specializations.
- Scale and sustain university and community college Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programming to engage and promote success among students who are first-generation, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and/or from disinvested communities.
- Provide intensive support services to students who face specific barriers to program completion and placement in industry-relevant jobs (e.g., parents of young children). This may include career and personal counseling, fee waivers and other financial support, tutoring, child care/transportation stipends, mentoring for first-generation students, and affinity-specific support groups.

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.

Tactics

- Organize "talent-industry exchanges" in each sub-region to concretely define shared occupational needs (particularly in emerging industry areas) and engage education and workforce systems around solutions. Initiate a "community of practice" across sub-regions for sharing and adoption of leading practices.
- Engage with small and mid-sized employers to bolster internal human resources capacity to promote more inclusive talent pipelines. This includes adopting skills-based hiring to make more positions available to those without formal degrees and initiatives to improve recruitment and retention of workers who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

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. This strategy implicates educational institutions, federal installations, economic development intermediaries, and entrepreneurs.

Tactics:

- Create and market central and/or sub-regional cross-institutional asset maps/directories to enable clearer understanding of the Central Coast's intellectual property assets and partnership mechanisms; offer concierge service to help firms navigate the directory, complete partnership requirements, and make connections.

- Improve the capacity of university tech transfer offices to engage in economic development-oriented activity through dedicated hires and other strategic initiatives.
- Support the development of "go to market" plans in priority areas to identify target firms/licensees for commercialization of university intellectual property and to focus university tech transfer staff activity.
- Bolster proof of concept funding to support validation of early-stage intellectual property, removing a core barrier to taking regional innovations to market.
- Make it easier for entrepreneurs and firms to access university innovation in priority areas through "innovation voucher" programs; bolster and promote existing opportunities, such as the California Test Beds program, which provides funds and a streamlined process for small businesses to undertake clean energy testing and validation activities at University of California campuses.
- Close gaps in early-stage capital access to ensure that university and other innovators can take ideas to market.
- Expand on existing defense commercialization efforts (e.g., FATHOMWERX, Monterey and Ventura NavalX Tech Bridges) to build more vibrant local ecosystems of firms leveraging defense technologies relevant to priority industries. Invest in off-base spaces and events to reduce physical barriers to access.
- Promote State matching of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) awards, following common practice in many states.
- Strengthen links between innovation institutions across the region to identify areas for joint or complementary research, commercialization, and contributions to economic development and quality job creation.

5. Increase Supports for High-Growth

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

Tactics:

- Build a more cohesive network of innovators and investors to achieve greater scale and access to capital in the Central Coast's entrepreneurial community.
- Establish regional or sub-regional "Founders Clubs" to engage proven/serial entrepreneurs and investors, promote connections, and provide a forum for pitching new investments. Adopt targeted initiatives (e.g., recruitment and mentoring of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and women founders) to promote equitable access.
- Advance soft-landing supports and topic-specific accelerator programs to attract, support, and retain national and global entrepreneurs and create critical scale in distinctive areas (e.g., advanced air mobility, AgTech).
- Develop specialized infrastructure facilities and talent pipelines required for entrepreneurial development.
- Bolster business incubation in targeted areas (e.g., advanced semiconductors).
- Undertake market studies and cluster building efforts to further define the Central Coast's competitive niche in emerging areas (e.g., blue tech) and drive specific entrepreneurial and economic development interventions.
- Improve targeting of regional small business development resources to serve middle market firms who may have unrealized opportunities for growth and/or be positioned for mergers and acquisitions (including via succession planning).

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. This strategy implicates economic development/entrepreneurship intermediaries; firms and entrepreneurs; universities,

community colleges, and other innovation institutions; local officials with land use authority; and utilities, among others.

Tactics:

- Build out lab, testing, demonstration, shared production, prototyping, and other facilities as needed to ensure the competitiveness and market position of individual sub-industries.
- Streamline permitting processes (and/or advocate for such reforms) to make it easier for researchers to carry out cutting-edge work (e.g., in the blue economy) that may lead to commercial applications.
- Advance more rapid electric power deployment and reliability through state and utility regulatory reforms, policy direction, and financing flexibility, overcoming delays and uncertainty that impede major business location and expansion in both rural and urban areas.
- Promote development of hydrogen production and fueling infrastructure to enable further utilization of this cleaner energy source.
- Increase access, reliability, affordability of high-speed internet, particularly in rural areas, to ensure tech-enabled activities can take place across the region.

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. This strategy implicates economic development intermediaries and firms.

Tactics:

- Expand access and awareness to technical assistance for adopting product and process innovations.
- Work with supply chain manufacturers to diversify their base of customers to improve resilience to economic shocks.
- Expand export promotion efforts to connect small and mid-sized firms to global markets and bolster the full region's manufacturing capacity through exposure to best-in-class global peers and practices. Undertake a market prioritization exercise to determine global markets most complementary to regional industry specializations.

Enhancing Job Quality in Prominent Sectors

The Central Coast's economy is driven by key sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and hospitality and tourism, along with other local-serving industries. From 2012 to 2022, these sectors were central to the region's economic expansion, as shown in Figure 11. Healthcare plays a crucial role in the regional economy by employing a critical workforce, enhancing residents' health, and providing essential services, especially during crises. This sector, which accounted for 19.7 percent of the employment growth from 2012 to 2022, also plays a key role in the region's appeal to potential workers and

businesses. Agriculture was the single largest contributor to tradable sector job growth, comprising about 18 percent of the region's overall job growth. The hospitality and tourism sector, which can be considered both tradable and local serving, also accounted for about 18 percent of employment growth across the Central Coast.⁴⁴ These sectors however offer relatively low job quality and minimal upward mobility. The share of quality jobs in agriculture is only 11 percent and in hospitality this share is even lower at 6.4 percent.

Figure 11: Share of Employment Growth by Sector (2012–2022)

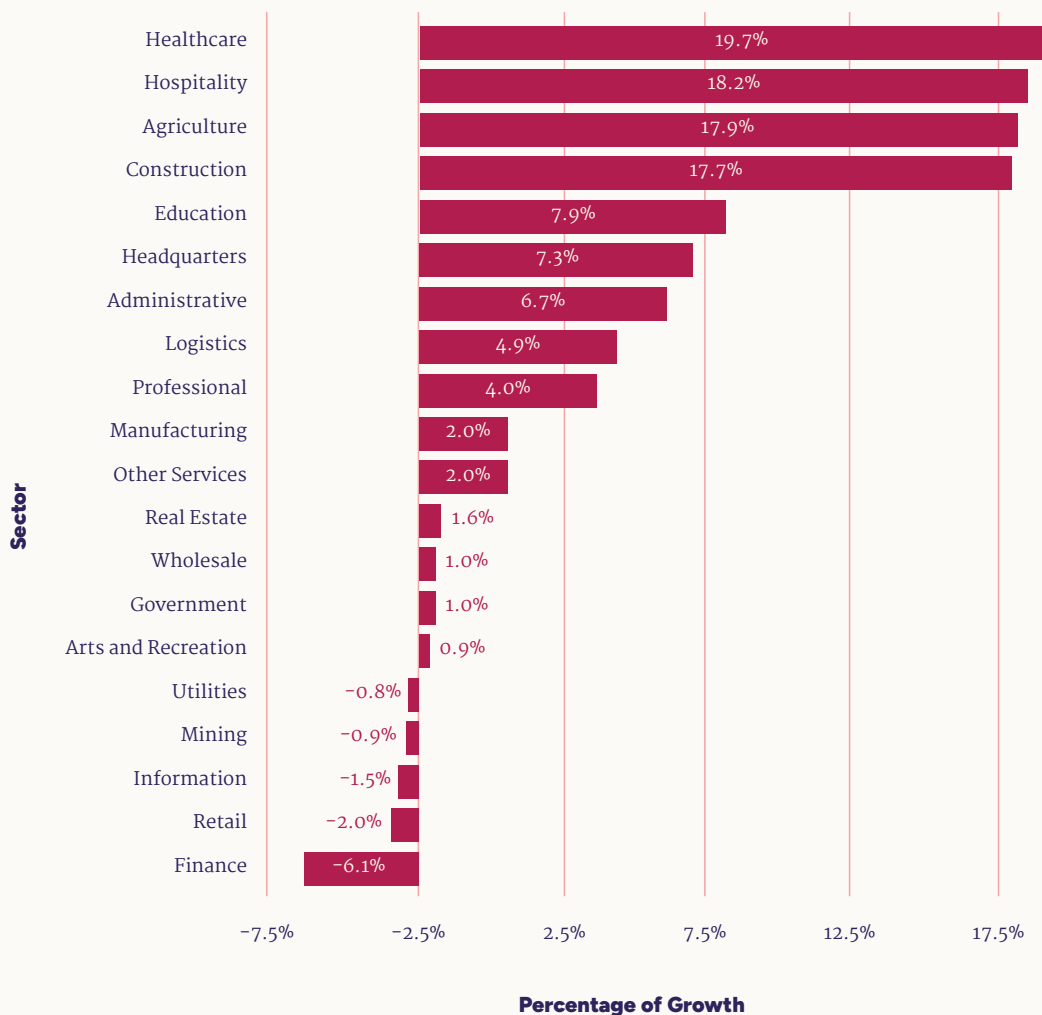


Figure 11: Share of Employment Growth by Sector (2012–2022). Source: Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

⁴⁴ Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

Alignment with Job Quality and Access, Equity, and Climate

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Unlike strategies for target sectors like Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services, which aim to create more quality jobs in the region, the strategies for the Healthcare, Agriculture, and Hospitality and Tourism sectors are centered on enhancing the quality of existing jobs. Despite the current scarcity of quality jobs in these sectors, the strategies outlined in this section are designed to assist local community members in securing these valuable roles and to provide them with opportunities for upskilling within their respective fields.

Strategies within this section also focus on upskilling the current workforce to ensure that as technology advances, incumbent workers can transition into higher-paying positions. For example, in the advent of AgTech, current agricultural workers can be prepared to fill emerging roles.

EQUITY

To improve quality job access for the region's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), underserved, and disinvested communities, it is crucial to provide equitable pathways and training opportunities. This includes offering trainings with flexible hours, online options, and language support to meet the needs of people working outside of standard business hours, juggling multiple high priorities, and speaking languages other than English. Additionally, marketing these training, upskilling, and language learning opportunities specifically to disinvested communities through social media outreach, trusted local community members, and other accessible channels is essential for ensuring that such resources reach those who they are intended to serve.

During Listening Sessions, the high cost of housing emerged as the number one issue across Central Coast Communities. **Without affordable housing, the region will not be able to prosper, even with an increase in quality jobs.** Strategies like employer sponsored housing can make it more feasible for workers to accept jobs in the Central Coast region, where housing costs are otherwise prohibitively expensive for many. This approach supports economic diversification and resilience by enabling the workforce to continue providing key services.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

The Central Coast faces increasing challenges with climate change including wildfires, heatwaves, and water scarcity, which affect agricultural operations, tourism sites, worker safety, and community health. Similar to the target sectors, the strategies in this section have passed a baseline filter for competitiveness, adhering to environmental standards, and aligning with California Jobs First's goals of transitioning to a climate-resilient, carbon-neutral economy. These strategies go beyond merely mitigating harm by creating quality job opportunities for a more sustainable future. Examples include reducing emissions by keeping the workforce local through employer-supported housing and advancing sustainable technologies in AgTech and regenerative agriculture.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The strategies outlined in this section emphasize upskilling incumbent workers, which promotes equitable job access by providing opportunities for career advancement and skill building. This approach simultaneously enhances economic resilience by cultivating a skilled workforce capable of adapting to industry shifts and economic challenges. Workforce development efforts are essential for sustaining these sectors, particularly by focusing on the region's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), underserved, and disinvested communities to achieve Uplift and California Jobs First objectives that aim to enhance equity. Given that Agriculture and Hospitality and Tourism are major components of the Central Coast's economy, a loss in these workforces could have significant downstream economic impacts. Recognizing this challenge, it is essential to focus on improving job quality and upskilling incumbent workers. Additionally, expanding the healthcare workforce not only opens additional opportunities for quality jobs within the community but also addresses existing gaps in healthcare resources, making the region more hospitable to the current workforce and more attractive to the broader workforce.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE STRATEGIES

The workforce development strategies presented in this section, as well as throughout the report, align with the State of California's workforce development goals. These strategies facilitate trainees' progression into higher-paying positions, enable participation through multiple "on and off ramps" and innovative scheduling practices, and ensure the acquisition of industry-valued credentials throughout the training process. By doing so, these training and upskilling initiatives are in alignment with California's 2020-2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan.

Additionally, supporting advancements in AgTech and regenerative agriculture aligns with the California Climate Scoping Plan, California Climate Adaptation Strategy, and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). These efforts not only promote sustainable agricultural practices but also contribute to the state's broader environmental and economic objectives.

Healthcare

The healthcare sector on the Central Coast is integral to the region's economic stability and the well-being of its residents.⁴⁵ It supports approximately 130,000 healthcare jobs and accounted for almost 20 percent of employment growth between 2012 and 2022.⁴⁶ The Central Coast offers several advantages to the healthcare sector, such as an expanding network of healthcare facilities, market signals indicating a growing need for diverse healthcare professionals, and a robust workforce pipeline supported by educational institutions and training programs. Examples include Cal Poly's health sciences programs, Allan Hancock College's allied health training, Monterey Peninsula College's nursing programs, Cuesta College's Health Sciences Division, and UC Santa Barbara's public health research initiatives. Furthermore, there are existing collaborations between K-12 schools and community colleges and universities, focusing on the support and development of socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

However, many rural health systems within the region are struggling with variations in healthcare access across different areas. For instance, Monterey faces substantial challenges with healthcare access, exacerbating disparities in care availability and quality. Residents often lack easy access to specialists and must drive long distances to receive care, leading to long waiting lists and limited mental health services. Furthermore, rural hospitals such as Hollister hospital are closing, exacerbating struggles in rural healthcare. Disparities in care also exist due to cultural differences, discrimination, mistrust, and stigma, further complicating access to quality healthcare.

Moreover, the high cost of living and the shortage of affordable housing on the Central Coast necessitate

initiatives to attract and retain talent in the healthcare sector. For example, employers such as Cottage Health have initiated employer-sponsored housing programs. These programs provide affordable housing options for employees, helping to mitigate the high cost of living in the region and making it easier for healthcare workers to live near their workplace. This not only improves job satisfaction and retention rates but also ensures that healthcare facilities are adequately staffed to meet community needs.

Additionally, the healthcare sector faces deep disparities between higher-paid practitioner positions and lower-paid support occupations. Physicians and specialized practitioners often receive competitive wages and career advancement opportunities, reflecting their extensive training and critical roles. Conversely, many support roles, such as nursing assistants, medical technicians, and administrative staff (which are also critical roles), receive relatively low wages and limited career growth prospects. This disparity impacts workforce stability and the overall quality of care, as lower-paid workers may experience higher turnover rates and job dissatisfaction.

Healthcare resilience is of paramount importance. This sector is necessary during steady-state conditions and is especially vital during public health crises, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A robust healthcare system is essential for responding to emergencies and ensuring the health and safety of the population, which in turn supports economic recovery and growth. To enhance job quality, access, and equity within the Central Coast healthcare sector, the region needs clear healthcare career pathways, partnerships between educational institutions and healthcare providers, and early career awareness programs.

⁴⁵ Reference page number 131 in Uplift's *Regional Plan Part I* for more information on the healthcare sector.

⁴⁶ Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

“We hear that people drive to Los Angeles to get a primary care provider or are on a year-long waitlist due to the shift to membership healthcare or ‘concierge services.’ This is not accessible to most people.”

Interview with member of SLO Healthcare Workforce Partnership

Healthcare Strategies

1. Expand Pathways into Quality Jobs for Lower Paid Healthcare Positions:

Create 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.

Tactics:

- Develop clear and detailed career pathway maps for lower paid healthcare positions, outlining the steps and requirements to advance to health jobs that are highly paid, in demand, and have strong future growth potential such as nurses, physical therapists, and physician assistants.
 - Collaborate with local community colleges and universities to create bridge programs that allow lower paid healthcare positions to earn credits towards advanced degrees and certifications.
 - Offer employer-sponsored, flexible training schedules, including online courses, evening classes, and weekend workshops, to accommodate working healthcare professionals.
 - Establish mentorship programs for professionals from disinvested communities in which experienced healthcare professionals guide and support them through their career progression.
- ### 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 between 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.

Tactics:

- Identify top professions and jobs (e.g., nursing, behavioral health, and allied health) for partnerships between educational and healthcare institutions to prioritize for preparing students and facilitating entry into those roles. Establish goals for the number and geographic location of professionals to be developed through the partnerships, focusing on students from disinvested communities.
- Develop, partner, and expand accessible externship programs that allow students to gain practical experience in healthcare settings, including hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities.
- Provide funding for paid internships for students to work in healthcare organizations serving underserved/disinvested communities.
- Integrate healthcare career training into the school curriculum, providing students with foundational knowledge and skills related to healthcare professions.
- Organize healthcare career fairs, workshops, and informational sessions to expose students to different healthcare careers and the required educational pathways.
- Establish advisory boards comprising educators, healthcare professionals, community representatives, and industry experts to align training programs' outcomes with the needs of the healthcare sector and the community.
- Create dual enrollment programs that enable high school students to take college-level courses in healthcare, earning credits towards their future degrees.



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.

Tactics:

- Develop, expand, and enhance programs that introduce students to various healthcare careers through interactive activities, guest speakers, and field trips to healthcare facilities.
- Establish healthcare clubs and student organizations in schools that focus on exploring healthcare careers and related topics.
- Create and distribute educational materials including brochures, videos, and online resources that provide information on healthcare career pathways and requirements.
- Promote the development of high school health academies.
- Organize healthcare-focused summer camps and workshops where students can engage in hands-on activities and learn from healthcare professionals.
- Involve community parents, community members, and CBOs, in promoting healthcare careers by hosting informational sessions and community events.
- Provide information on scholarships, financial aid, and government programs (e.g., Pell Grant), internships, and other opportunities that support paying for education for students who are interested in pursuing healthcare careers.
- Increase employer capacity and policies to promote the support for programs that provide a pathway into quality jobs in healthcare.

“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

The agriculture sector remains a pivotal component of the Central Coast's economy, not only as a primary source of food production but also as a significant employment generator.⁴⁷ With over 125,000 individuals engaged in agricultural production on the Central Coast, this sector accounts for a substantial portion of regional employment.⁴⁸ However, many agricultural jobs provide low wages and expose workers to environmental risks, such as pesticides and extreme weather conditions.

The impacts of climate change, including wildfires, heatwaves, and water scarcity, increasingly challenge agricultural operations and worker safety, intensifying the urgency for adaptive strategies through AgTech. While AgTech promises enhanced efficiency and sustainability, it also presents opportunities for commercialization—transforming research-driven innovations into market-ready technologies that can drive economic growth. At the same time, AgTech introduces challenges related to job displacement due to automation and the need for a workforce with different skill sets.

Climate change poses serious threats to the region, manifesting through increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. The region has already experienced severe drought conditions, exacerbating water scarcity and impacting agricultural productivity, as well as wildfires and flooding. Climate change influences crop selection, crop acreage, and the demand for water, which can impact the diversity of crops planted and overall agricultural biodiversity. These climate-related impacts are expected to further reduce agricultural crop yields, placing additional financial burdens on farms and resulting in potential job losses.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the Central Coast benefits from unique geographical and climatic advantages that position the region to excel in adopting and commercializing AgTech and regenerative agriculture innovations. Notable AgTech firms like FarmBot, Acre Cloud, and FarmNG in Watsonville, alongside academic institutions such as UC Santa Barbara, Cal Poly, UC Santa Cruz, CSU Monterey Bay, and Hartnell College, play crucial roles in driving both innovation and commercialization within the sector. Land-based models, such as those used at the Center for Land-Based Learning, provide youth mentoring, opportunities for climate and sustainability research, and landowner education, further demonstrating the region's potential in innovative and sustainable agriculture.

Sizable investments into the region's agriculture sector are driving advancements in both agricultural practices and the commercialization of new technologies. For example, Taylor Farms made a significant contribution to Cal Poly's new Plant Sciences Complex, while Farmlink offers agricultural technical assistance. Additionally, startups benefit from resources like UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) and industry groups like Western Growers, creating pathways for AgTech innovations to reach market and scale.

In response to these dynamics, the following strategies strive to equitably harness the benefits of AgTech, while focusing on the commercialization of new technologies to foster regional economic growth and innovation. These strategies emphasize improving job quality, expanding access to quality jobs, and fostering equity within the agriculture sector, helping both the current and future workforce prepare for the evolving landscape of AgTech in the Central Coast region.

⁴⁷ Reference page number 126 in Uplift's *Regional Plan Part I* for more information on the agriculture sector.

⁴⁸ Regional Plan Part I *Databook*, Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates

⁴⁹ Oehninger, Ernst Bertone, C.-Y. Cynthia Lin Lawell, James N. Sanchirico, and Michael R. Springborn. "The Effects of Climate Change on Agricultural Groundwater Extraction", Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, 2016. https://clinlawell.dyson.cornell.edu/groundwater_climate_change_paper.pdf



Agriculture Strategies

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 agricultural ready workforce will help current and future workers transition smoothly, thereby maintaining productivity and equitably mitigating potential job displacement. Doing so aligns with the State of California workforce development strategies such as the Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan, the California Climate Scoping Plan, and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

Tactics:

- Identify specific training needs and skill gaps among agricultural workers, focusing on both current requirements and future skills anticipated as the sector evolves, with an emphasis on AgTech and regenerative agriculture practices.
- Develop and expand partnerships between leading industry employers and TK-12 educational institutions, community colleges, and universities to introduce students early to AgTech and regenerative agriculture practices.
- Create and implement training modules covering a wide range of skills including AgTech applications, equipment operation, maintenance, safety protocols, sustainable farming practices, and regenerative agriculture techniques.
- Partner with leading AgTech companies and equipment manufacturers across the Central Coast for hands-on training. Some examples of these include but are not limited to Driscoll's in Watsonville for advanced berry cultivation techniques, and Taylor Farms in Salinas, known for their innovations in automated harvesting and regenerative agriculture.
- Facilitate joint research initiatives between agricultural businesses and academic institutions to develop new sustainable farming and regenerative farming techniques and technologies. Collaborations could involve CSU, Monterey Bay, and UC Santa Cruz, focusing on soil health and water conservation.
- Implement on-the-job AgTech and regenerative agriculture training programs allowing workers to learn new skills while continuing their employment, enabling immediate application of new knowledge in practical settings.
- Offer certification programs that recognize and validate the AgTech and regenerative agriculture skills acquired by workers, thereby enhancing their employability and readiness for advanced roles within the agriculture sector.
- Expand partnerships with educational institutions such as Cal Poly, which has a strong focus on agricultural sciences, and Allan Hancock College, which offers programs in viticulture and agribusiness.
- Engage with a broad range of involved entities including farmers, agribusinesses, environmental groups, and policymakers to ensure the workforce pipeline aligns with regional needs and goals.
- Integrate training on automation technologies and the changing landscape of agriculture to prepare workers for the increasing use of technology and regenerative practices in the field.
- Emphasize the importance of upskilling to avoid job loss, ensuring that workers are equipped not just for current roles but also for future technological shifts within the sector.



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.

Tactics:

- Facilitate joint research initiatives between agricultural businesses and academic institutions to develop new sustainable and regenerative farming techniques and technologies such as water conservation, soil health, and crop yield optimization and agroecology research to reduce farmworker and consumer exposure to pesticides.
- Set up research facilities dedicated to sustainable practices such as regenerative agriculture and dry farming, focusing on practices that enhance soil health and water conservation.
- Create innovation hubs that bring together researchers, farmers, and AgTech developers to pilot new technologies and practices.
- Secure funding from government grants, private investors, and industry partners to support research projects and innovation initiatives.
- Develop programs that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and leading practices between academia and the agricultural sector, including workshops, seminars, published research, and field days.
- Support commercialization pathways for new AgTech innovations, including business incubation programs, patenting assistance, and partnerships with venture capitalists and industry players to bring research-driven technologies to market.
- Establish or strengthen current industry-academia commercialization accelerators, facilitating faster adoption of innovative technologies by the agricultural sector through demonstration projects, market testing, and early-stage commercialization support.

Hospitality and Tourism

Hospitality and Tourism is a key economic sector on the Central Coast.⁵⁰ Known for its stunning coastline, vineyards, and popular tourist destinations such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the Channel Islands, Hearst Castle, and the scenic Highway 1 Road Trip, visitors worldwide are attracted to the region. These sites not only strengthen the local economy but also enhance the region’s quality of life, contributing to its appeal as a place to live and work. Hotels and wineries are fundamental components of a lifestyle economy aimed at affluent consumers and are major employers within the region, along with restaurants as the more localized aspect of hospitality. From 2012 to 2022, hospitality accounted for 18.2 percent of the region’s overall growth in employment.⁵¹ Certain counties saw even higher proportions, particularly San Luis Obispo (30.3 percent), San Benito (28.5 percent), and Ventura (23.7 percent) counties.⁵²

While tourism thrives in the Central Coast, the sector does face challenges, particularly in terms of job quality and opportunities for worker advancement. Even though there are career paths in this industry that could allow entry level employees to progress into roles such as a sales manager, director of sales, or general manager, this potential is overshadowed by the overall low number of quality jobs in the sector. Only 6.4 percent of hospitality jobs are considered quality jobs, with the highest rates in Monterey County (8.9 percent) and the lowest in Ventura County (4.3 percent). The number of quality jobs held in the hospitality industry is relatively low regardless of a person’s race and ethnicity, as shown in Figure 12. The juxtaposition between the size of the industry and the low quality of these jobs underscores the need for focused efforts to improve employment conditions within the industry.

Figure 12: Number of Quality Jobs in the Hospitality Industry by Race and Ethnicity

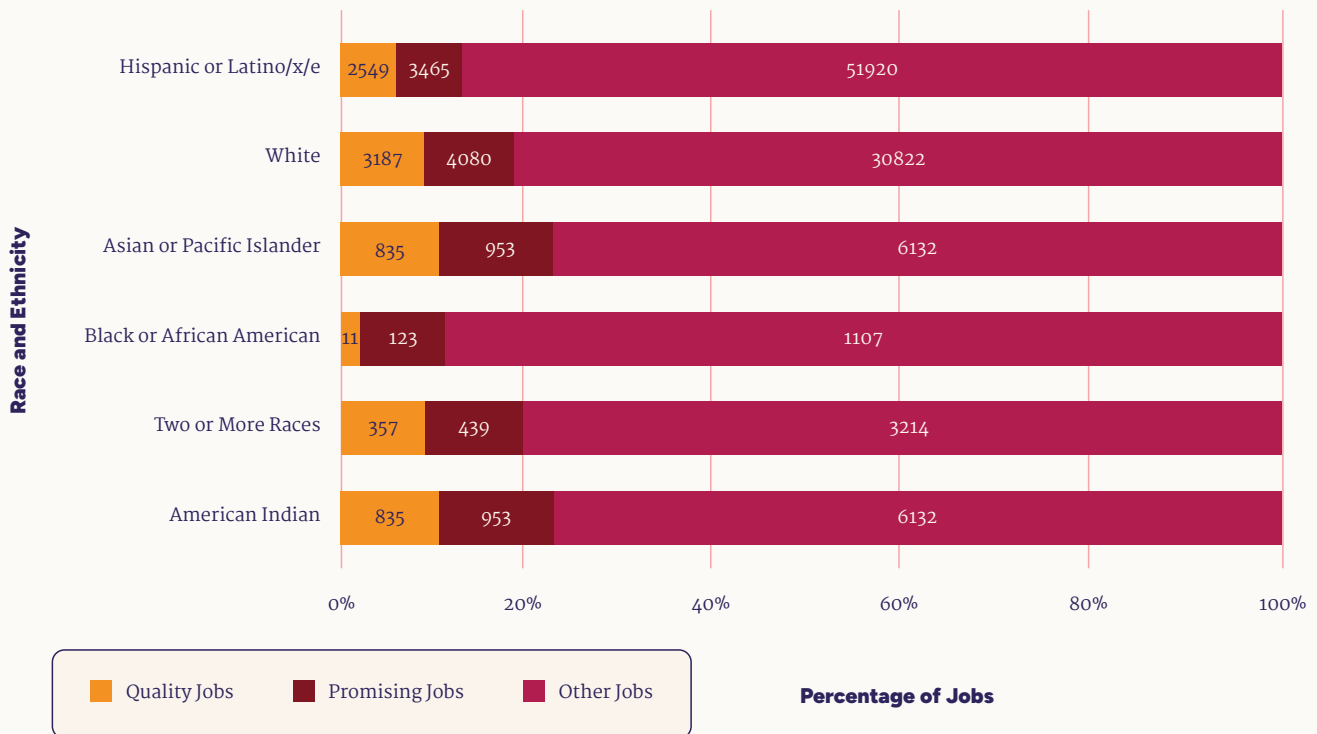


Figure 12: Number of Quality Jobs in the Hospitality Industry by Race and Ethnicity. Source: Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

⁵⁰ Reference page number 128 in Uplift’s *Regional Plan Part I* for more information on the hospitality and tourism sector.

⁵¹ Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

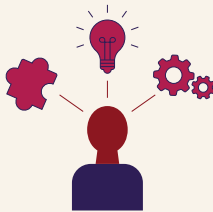
⁵² Brookings/Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

Because hospitality and tourism is a major part of the Central Coast's economy, a loss in this workforce could have downstream economic impacts. As stated earlier, despite its importance, the sector has a relatively low number of quality jobs. Recognizing this challenge, focusing on improving job quality and upskilling incumbent workers is critical. 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 this report.⁵³ For example, the Sustainable Hospitality and Tourism Management Program at California State University Monterey Bay partners with local entities such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Monterey Hospitality Association, and the Pebble Beach Company. These partnerships help students gain valuable

experience through volunteering at events and service-learning placements, as well as through internships and employment. By providing hands-on experience and direct exposure to industry practices, these partnerships play a crucial role in improving job quality and creating clear career pathways for students, preparing them for advanced roles within the hospitality and tourism sector.

Offering employer sponsored housing is another way to increase the quality of hospitality and tourism jobs. Housing costs have surged on the Central Coast, making it hard for workers to find affordable accommodations. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive, collaborative approach to bridge the gap between affordable housing and the needs of the hospitality and tourism workforce. Employer sponsored housing is highlighted in the Housing section of the report.⁵⁴

WHERE TO FIND HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM STRATEGIES:



On the Job Training and
Upskilling Training and
Apprenticeship Programs



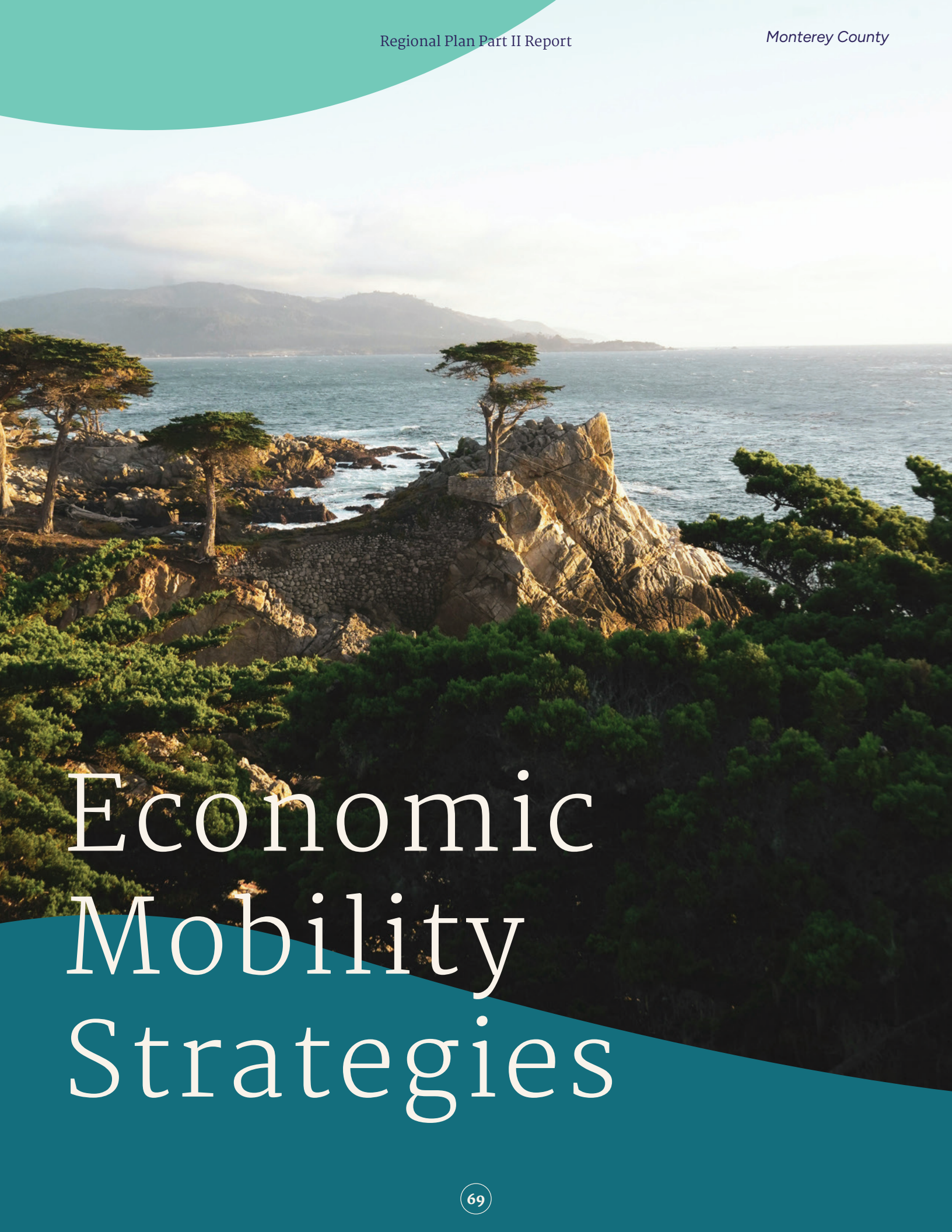
Employer
Sponsored
Housing

In addition to California Jobs First, there are ongoing economic efforts to improve the hospitality and tourism industry across California that could positively impact the Central Coast. The U.S. Department of Commerce awarded the State of California with a \$5 million grant to prepare strategic tourism plans for each tourism region in the state, including the Central Coast. Visit California is conducting research with industry representatives, residents, and community leaders in each region to develop these strategic plans. The plans will examine a wide range of tourism dynamics such as destination brand perceptions, housing imbalances, environmental challenges, workforce development, public safety issues, infrastructure priorities, and digital marketing performance. Tourism businesses and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) will use the findings and recommendations from those strategic plans to inform business decisions, inspire partnerships with local governments and nonprofits, and build a more sustainable future for the industry. Currently, the Central Coast's strategic tourism plan highlights strategies aligned to workforce housing, community and employer engagement, and sustainability.⁵⁵

⁵³ Please see the Economic Mobility Strategies section for details on training, upskilling, and apprenticeship programs.

⁵⁴ Please see the Community Development Strategies section for details on employer sponsored housing.

⁵⁵ Regional Strategic Tourism Plans, Visit California, <https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/partner-opportunities/programs/regional-planning>.



Economic Mobility Strategies

While the previous section on Target Sector Strategies concentrated on strengthening specific sectors, the following Economic Mobility Strategies are sector-neutral and are designed to apply across industries. **These strategies are designed to foster entrepreneurship, facilitate training and upskilling, and enhance overall climate, sustainability, economic mobility, and the overall economic conditions on the Central Coast.**

Entrepreneurship and small business development are pivotal in fostering regional economic dynamism, creating new value, and supporting job creation. These elements are especially crucial for enabling wealth-building among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, who have historically been marginalized in economic opportunities. Both national data and qualitative insights indicate that BIPOC entrepreneurs face unique systemic inequities, such as limited access to capital, which greatly hinders their ability to launch and maintain businesses. Training and upskilling are vital across all sectors and especially in the region's key industries—agriculture, and hospitality and tourism. Upskilling incumbent workers not only prepares them to seize new opportunities but also equips them with advanced skills necessary for transitioning into promising or quality jobs.

Main Street and BIPOC Small Business Development

The start-up and scale-up of new businesses is a fundamental indicator of a healthy economy. This activity represents the dynamic generation of new ideas, solutions, and services that drive commerce, employment, community vitality, and—in some cases—societal change via advancement in technology, health, and other domains. Nationally, 46 percent of private-sector workers are employed in a small business.⁵⁶

Encompassing enterprises like shops, restaurants, child care providers, personal care, and some business services serving local areas, Main Street small business development is a critical avenue for wealth-building for women, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents, and immigrants, who often face labor market discrimination and barriers.⁵⁷ Black business owners, for instance, tend to hold much higher levels of wealth than non-business owners.⁵⁸ Community advocates on the Central Coast also noted that small business ownership provides a more accessible pathway to self-sufficiency and wealth-building for the undocumented community than employment requiring a W-2. Further, these businesses contribute meaningfully to the vitality of local areas, reinvesting profits in community and enabling residents to access important services near where they live.



Despite the promise of small business development, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) small business owners face distinct barriers that limit success. Barriers include limited access to capital and financing, systemic discrimination and bias in the business ecosystem, a lack of mentorship and networking opportunities, challenges in navigating regulatory environments, and disparities in access to education and business resources. Additionally, these businesses tend to be capitalized by personal savings, rather than from institutional lending, which limits their ability to scale (and thereby wealth generation) and exposes entrepreneurs to greater personal risk.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Rebecca Leppert, “A look at small businesses in the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, April 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/22/a-look-at-small-businesses-in-the-us/>.

⁵⁷ A second dimension of entrepreneurship is high-growth enterprises, often concentrated in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. These firms translate technical knowledge and processes into high-value traded products and services. They typically seek significant successive rounds of capital to support development and validation activities, production and scaling, hiring, and other large-scale business needs (e.g., facilities). High-growth entrepreneurship is addressed within target sector strategies in Part 1 of this report.

⁵⁸ Joyce Klein, “Building Wealth Inclusively Through Business Ownership”, *The Future of Wealth*, Aspen Institute, 2021, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/building-wealth-inclusively-through-business-ownership/>.

⁵⁹ Klein, “Building Wealth Inclusively Through Business Ownership.”

“Every day there is a challenge...It is trial by fire, [but] now I can walk someone through these processes like getting workers comp.”

**Small Business (Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Entrepreneurship)
Roundtable hosted by Uplift virtually**

Engagement with Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) small business owners and support intermediaries during the strategy development process affirmed these and other barriers on the Central Coast:

- **Access to Culturally Responsive Technical Assistance:** Basic (but often intensive-to-deliver) supports, such as business coaching, business planning, legal services, and education on local and state policies were emphasized as critical factors for successful Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurship outcomes. While these services exist in the region, they are not fully scaled to demand. Nor are they sufficiently designed, in many cases, to serve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs. These services must be physically accessible to communities and available in Spanish, Mixteco, and other languages as appropriate. Additionally, whenever possible, these services must be paired with grants or stipends to put training into action.
- **Digital Skills:** Some small business owners can benefit from additional business-focused digital skills required for successful management and operations. These range from the ability to use a computer to proficiency in software such as QuickBooks, digital marketing, and social media.

- **Local Regulation:** Both general business regulations, and industry-specific policies and requirements can be streamlined and better communicated to entrepreneurs who do not speak English, lack formal education, or have low digital skills.
- **Financial Literacy and Capital Access:** Entrepreneurs from disinvested communities can benefit from assistance to raise sufficient capital to start-up, sustain, and scale ventures to their full potential. Prospective (and existing) business owners may be unbanked and/or do hold collateral or credit ratings sufficient to secure conventional loans.⁶⁰ They may also face discrimination in lending markets. As a result, they may turn to predatory lenders or simply be unable to access resources. Improving financial capability can also improve local entrepreneurs' ability to access tax credits and government programs.

The region already has a strong baseline of capacity in Main Street small business development. Working through these proven providers to scale programming—and compensate for expected funding cuts prompted by the sunset of COVID-era funds and the State of California budget shortfall—is likely the most efficient way to reinforce impact.



⁶⁰ Lack of existing banking relationships was widely cited as a contributing factor to racial disparities in receipt of COVID-era Paycheck Protection Program funds and other SBA funds. See, for instance, Sifan Liu and Joseph Parilla, "New data shows small businesses in communities of color had unequal access to federal COVID-19 relief," Brookings Institution, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-data-shows-small-businesses-in-communities-of-color-had-unequal-access-to-federal-covid-19-relief/>.

Community-oriented providers in the region have a proven track record of advancing creative solutions. These include focused support in specific industry areas both accessible to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and women-owned entrepreneurs, and responsive to community needs. For instance, El Pájaro CDC (based in Watsonville, serving the Central Coast northern sub-region) and Women’s Economic Ventures (based in Santa Barbara, serving Santa Barbara and Ventura counties) have both led recent initiatives to promote home-based child care enterprises with seed capital and customized entrepreneurship education. Ventures (headquartered in Watsonville) is advancing co-op models in areas such as child care and community health, aiming to promote community wealth-building and higher-quality jobs through lower overhead and de-emphasis on profit-seeking by external interests. The organization has also promoted transitions to employee ownership through succession planning, a growing opportunity given the region’s aging business owner population. Meanwhile, the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, First 5 SLO County, San Luis Obispo County Early Care & Education Planning Council, San Luis Obispo County and the City of San Luis Obispo have also provided business startup assistance, grant programs, and intensive business coaching aimed at promoting home-based child care enterprises. Additionally, EDC further provides specialized assistance focused on the unique needs of family child care providers.

Other providers include the region’s network of Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and chambers of

commerce. EDC provides SBDC services for Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, serving 2,500 clients a year with a cadre of 60 advisors, and leads the California network of SBDCs for positive economic outcomes for women and minority owned businesses. Cal Poly hosts San Luis Obispo’s SBDC, in tandem with the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) incubator; in 2023, the SBDC served 590 clients and reached 2,285 individuals through trainings. The Monterey County Business Council recently assumed SBDC responsibilities for Monterey and San Benito Counties and plans to focus on more targeted, community-driven service delivery to South Monterey County. Santa Cruz County’s SBDC is hosted at Cabrillo College, serving about 700 to 800 firms a year.

ALIGNMENT WITH JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS, EQUITY, AND CLIMATE

Starting a small business is inherently a risk; it is not a guarantee of a self-sufficient income. However, entrepreneurship positions successful owners to build wealth not possible through salaried or hourly work. This wealth can either be reinvested in the enterprise or directed to other goals (e.g., a house, a child’s education, intergenerational wealth transfers). Supporting Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs—and their broader communities—to avail themselves of these wealth-building opportunities has the potential to close a range of racial and gender equity gaps.

Though not directly focused on climate resilience, Main Street entrepreneurship could reduce emissions from vehicle commuting by facilitating more home-based businesses and services closer to communities.

“How do people who don’t speak English go through this, because this is a difficult process?”

Small Business (Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Entrepreneurship) Roundtable hosted by Uplift virtually

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Unlike specific industry sectors, the skills required for managing a small business vary depending on the nature of the enterprise. Entrepreneurship education on generally applicable topics (e.g., business planning, financial literacy, navigating the legal and regulatory environment) is a major emphasis of this set of strategies. Such efforts seek to equip both new and existing entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge to effectively launch, sustain, and scale a business. The Central Coast's Workforce Development Boards may also prioritize entrepreneurship education through outreach and job center activity.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE STRATEGIES

Small business development and entrepreneurship is a clear priority of the State of California. This is exemplified by the mission and activities of the California Office of the Small Business Advocate, a division of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development. A Central Coast entrepreneurship initiative co-led by El Pájaro CDC and Ventures was also awarded a Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) Pilot Implementation Grant in 2023. This grant is focused on the Latino Workers and Entrepreneurs Resiliency Pathway, which includes financial capability, entrepreneurship education (including cooperative structures), technical assistance, coaching, and capital access.

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

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). This strategy implicates community-based organizations and other entrepreneurship support providers.

Tactics:

- Extend the reach of hands-on business coaching, business planning, assistance navigating permitting and leasing, and other specialized services (e.g., legal), emphasizing delivery in Spanish, Mixteco, and other languages as appropriate.
- Pair technical assistance with grant funding and stipends to enable small business clients to act on new knowledge.
- Prioritize satellite offices or other physical presence in disinvested communities (e.g., south Monterey County) to build trust and reduce barriers to access.
- Deepen partnerships between city governments and local networks of service providers to enable greater economies of scale and delivery of culturally responsive programming.
- Increase multi-year funding to existing small business support centers to enable expansion and greater reliability of service.
- Expand targeted services to help small businesses navigate industry-specific regulatory processes.
- Improve small business digital skills proficiency in areas ranging from basic computer skills to digital marketing and utilization of market insights and analytics.
- Convene local officials to determine the feasibility of streamlining small business regulations and processes.



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. This strategy implicates community-based organizations and other entrepreneurship support providers.

Tactics:

- Expand financial literacy/capability resources to reduce the number of “unbanked” Central Coast small business owners and residents.
- Develop and promote alternative capital sources offering greater flexibility than conventional lenders in underwriting loans (e.g., sources of collateral, measures of credit).
- Pair loans and grants with technical assistance to promote successful start-up or scale-up.
- Ensure resources account for the differential capital needs of industries (e.g., higher up-front equipment investments for child care and food businesses).
- Strengthen the capability of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to meet the capital needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs.
- Harness regional wealth (i.e., high net worth individuals) in a new fund(s) to support local small businesses needing capital.
- Proactively counsel entrepreneurs around key growth phases (e.g., transition from microenterprise to small business, from small business to middle market) to maximize opportunities for scale-ups and wealth-building.

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. This strategy implicates community-based organizations, other entrepreneurship support providers, regional firms, and anchor institutions.

Tactics:

- Promote and provide infrastructure (e.g., succession planning assistance) to support cooperative business models that elevate employees to owners, leveraging the impending retirement of Baby Boomer business owners.
- Provide intensive technical assistance to identified employee-owners, spanning business coaching and education (e.g., management, finance, accounting, and leadership tailored for specific industries) and ongoing support (e.g., managed organization services).
- Initiate or scale sub-regional procurement initiatives to aggregate demand and secure commitments for small businesses to contract with hospitals, universities, and other anchor institutions.



- 4. Support Community Kitchens⁶¹ and Regional Food Hubs:⁶²** 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. Based on community feedback, there are a few examples of successful community kitchens that already exist on the Central Coast, such as the El Pájaro Community Development Corporation's Commercial Kitchen Incubator and the Kitchen Terminal, which have locations in Camarillo and San Luis Obispo. Community kitchens can provide an opportunity for entrepreneurship for individuals, including immigrants, who can share their home culture and cuisine.

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.

FOOD HUB EXAMPLE: THE SACRAMENTO REGION FOOD HUB

Initiated by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), the Sacramento Region Food Hub serves as a model for enhancing local food access and supporting regional agricultural infrastructure. The food hub is location-neutral and designed to efficiently connect local producers with markets, thereby improving the distribution of locally grown food. Additionally, the Sacramento Region Food Hub created a Financial Feasibility Toolkit with pro forma worksheets to aid other regions in replicating this model and aid others in assessing the financial aspects of a Food Hub.

⁶¹ A Community Kitchen or Commercial Community Kitchen is a professionally equipped workspace that can be rented by individuals or businesses. This type of kitchen is designed to support small culinary businesses that might not have the capital to invest in their own commercial kitchen space. The goal of community kitchens is to minimize the initial investment required to start a food-related business by providing shared spaces and resources.

⁶² A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of food products primarily from local or regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand. By investing in regional food hubs local farmers can obtain market access and the community can more easily obtain fresh, locally produced, and sustainably grown food. Establishing food hubs can bring new jobs and business opportunities in food processing, distribution, and retail. By keeping food processing local, food hubs can reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions associated with transportation, aligning with the state's climate goals and strategies such as the California Climate Scoping Plan.

Tactics:

- Develop fully equipped commercial kitchen spaces tailored to local permitting and zoning provisions, ensuring they can serve multiple businesses at once.
- Market these facilities across various communities, with a focus on disinvested communities to maximize impact.
- Collaborate with food hubs, food banks, and farmers to reduce food waste and establish direct supply chains, thus enhancing efficiency and sustainability. Recognizing that food banks across the region play a pivotal role in food access, maintaining partnerships with local food banks can be instrumental.
- Implement sustainable practices and green technologies, such as solar-powered facilities, water recycling systems, and waste reduction programs. Waste reduction is in line with Senate Bill (SB) 1383⁶³ food recovery and rescue goals.
- Develop or enhance existing infrastructure to create fully operational food hubs. This might include physical facilities for storage, processing, and distribution, as well as technology systems for inventory management and logistics. If developing new food hubs, strategically choose the locations for the hubs to maximize accessibility for both farmers and consumers, particularly focusing on proximity to disinvested communities.
- Address middle-of-the-supply-chain resource issues for aggregation, simple processing (e.g., peeling, dicing, filleting, etc.), and distribution.
- Build partnerships with larger institutions, such as public-school districts, to locally supply free lunch to students.
- Connect with existing efforts, such as Santa Barbara County Food Action Network (SBC FAN), which works to connect, advocate, and build capacity with a network of food system actors.



⁶³ To reduce food waste and help address food insecurity, SB 1383 requires that by 2025 California will recover 20 percent of edible food that would otherwise be sent to landfills, to feed people in need. Source: <https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp/foodrecovery/>.

⁶⁴ The Food Action Network works to connect, advocate, and build capacity with a network of food system actors to foster an equitable and robust local food economy, a healthy and just community, and a well-stewarded, resilient foodshed. Source: <https://sbfoodaction.org/>.

Training, Upskilling, and Learning and Development

Training and upskilling are pivotal for fostering economic development and ensuring a robust, adaptable workforce. The strategies below are focused on training the local workforce to move from low-paying or no jobs into quality jobs, as well as preparing youth for a future where they can thrive. Relevant across several industries, such as healthcare, agriculture, and hospitality, these strategies empower individuals to gain necessary skills, transition into quality employment, and contribute to a stronger, more resilient workforce. Implementing these strategies will require collaboration between employers, workforce development boards, and educational institutions.

Training, Upskilling, and Learning and Development Strategies

- 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, thus aligning with California’s 2020–2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan.

EXISTING PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: THE WORKFORCE LITERACY PROGRAM (WLPP)

The WLPP is a pilot program funded by the California Employment Training Panel and administered for Ventura and Santa Barbara counties by EDC. WLPP funds workplace literacy training in English, math, digital skills, workforce preparation activities, and technical skills. WLPP’s goals are to advance equity, increase competitive edge, support pathways to quality jobs and provide training.

Employer industry sectors may include agriculture, hospitality, manufacturing, shipping, childcare, healthcare, warehousing, food production, and other relevant industries. These funds are intended to train unemployed, employed, or seasonal workers who are immigrants, refugees, or English language learners.



Tactics:

- Collaboratively develop curriculum with employers and maintain employer involvement throughout the process. In coordination with employers, develop a tailored training model based on these identified needs that align skills with higher-paying job positions. For example, in the child care sector, topics such as child care-related technological literacy and the “business of child care” to help home based child care providers scale quickly can be included.
 - Partner and collaborate with local educational institutions and workforce development agencies to create certified training courses that can be conducted on site during work hours. Partner with workforce development boards and businesses to promote better utilization of the Employment Training Panel (ETP).
 - Create incentives for employers that upskill their workers and provide these education and certification opportunities.
 - Enact “earn and learn” policies that facilitate skill attainment while also allowing individuals to be compensated, so that trainings can be equitably accessed.
 - Market these opportunities to a wide range of individuals, especially those in disinvested communities, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and other underrepresented communities.
- 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.

Programs can be tailored to meet the immediate and future demands of the workforce, focusing on the Central Coast’s key industries such as hospitality and tourism, agriculture, and healthcare. By developing or improving training and apprenticeship programs in collaboration with local high schools, community colleges, and employers, today’s youth and other unemployed individuals can be prepared for regional opportunities. Building on existing education and training pathways across the Central Coast is crucial. Additionally, expanding outreach and marketing efforts to disinvested communities will attract a broader pool of potential employees and inform them about training, internship opportunities, and available quality jobs. This strategy focuses on equitable job access and economic resilience, aligning with California’s 2020–2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan.

EXISTING PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: RANCHO CIELO

Rancho Cielo in Monterey County offers vocational training and high school education in partnership with John Muir Charter Schools. Rancho Cielo was established to develop a comprehensive learning and social services center for the region’s underserved youth. Students can earn a The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)-accredited high school diploma (or equivalent), leave prepared to enter the workforce, and/or enroll in post-secondary education. For more information, please see <https://www.ranchocieloyc.org/>.

Some of the services that Rancho Cielo offers includes:

- Ag Technology & Mechatronics
- Construction & Sustainable Design Academy
- Welding & Fabrication
- Drummond Culinary Academy

Tactics:

- Establish and formalize partnerships between industry leaders and educational institutions. Establish formal agreements with high schools, community colleges, and universities to create integrated training and apprenticeship programs, including well paid internship opportunities.
- Collaborate with universities, community colleges, and vocational schools to create tailored courses that meet the specific needs of the hospitality industry, focusing on both operational skills and management. Work collaboratively to develop curriculum that meets the needs of local hospitality businesses, focusing on both operational and managerial skills. Focus on building skills that will allow students to be placed in quality jobs.
- Design comprehensive apprenticeship programs focused on regional sectors such as hospitality and tourism, agriculture, and healthcare, emphasizing hands-on learning experiences. These programs should integrate classroom knowledge with practical application and support job placement in quality positions. Additionally, establish a monitoring system to track the pay and benefits associated with these roles, ensuring that students secure jobs offering a living wage and sustainable career development.
- Incentivize and support students to alleviate financial disparities. Offer scholarships or financial aid options specifically aimed at students from disinvested communities or low-income backgrounds.
- Market these opportunities specifically to disinvested communities.
- Secure commitments from local businesses to provide interviews for quality jobs for students who complete these programs.
- Coordinate with existing apprenticeship programs and workforce development agencies providing these programs.

3. Promote Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive

Upskilling Programs: The Central Coast region is home to a diverse population with speakers of several languages. Non-English speakers often face disadvantages, missing out on quality job opportunities they would otherwise excel in. Conversely, English speakers could benefit from learning other commonly spoken languages in the region, such as Spanish, Mixteco, Triqui, Chatino, and Tagalog. Effective communication is crucial for many jobs and is a common aspiration among residents. However, finding the time to learn new languages is a privilege not everyone has. 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. Like other training strategies, upskilling individuals linguistically aligns with the State's workforce development strategies and efforts.

Tactics:

- Facilitate partnerships between employers and language educators, language learning platforms, and local workforce agencies; prioritize employers with a high concentration of quality jobs and high need for language education among their workforces.
- Connect newly trained bilingual workers with translation and interpretation service providers to support a pathway to quality jobs, particularly among those from disinvested communities.
- Provide interim services to support limited English-proficient individuals transition into new employment opportunities, potentially through industry-specific language training.
- Provide video production training for Indigenous language speakers so they can create videos to disseminate audio information to Indigenous language speakers, as many Indigenous languages from Mexico, such as Mixteco, are not written.



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

At least 45 percent of residents in the Central Coast Region belong to a family whose income does not cover the basic costs of living (see Figure 4 on page 22). This amounts to over 1 million residents living in struggling families in 2021.⁶⁵ Breaking multi-generational cycles of financial struggling can be immensely difficult, particularly when individuals do not know what they do not know. In systems intentionally designed to be exclusive, learning how to get by can require additional support and guidance. 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. Familias con Mas is a similar program led by Ventures. 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.

Tactics:

- Partner with trusted and well-known entities such as CBOs, relevant government agencies/programs, banks, and realtors to participate in the program.
- Amplify outreach of programs to families from disinvested communities.

⁶⁵ Approximately 803,000 Central Coast residents belong to struggling working families and 218,000 belong to struggling non-working families.

Child Care

For families with young children, high quality child care provides a two generation benefit.⁶⁶ It fosters children's early development, which leads to better outcomes in life, and allows parents/caregivers to be fully present at work. For communities and for the current and future workforce, child care serves as a foundational sector that leads to healthier and more robust communities. However, many Central Coast residents struggle to make ends meet and cannot find affordable child care. Without child care, as highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, those with young children are not able to fully participate in the workforce or are required to make tough choices for their families. The responsibility of child care disproportionately falls on women, resulting in women more often missing work, health care appointments, and other events when there are gaps in child care coverage.⁶⁷ In 2021, 30 percent of working mothers took time off work because school or daycare was closed.⁶⁸ Expanding the availability of affordable child care can make the region more livable, encourage the development of new tradable industries, and help existing industries remain competitive. By improving access to child care, the region has the potential to enhance workforce stability and productivity, enabling more caregivers of young children⁶⁹ to engage in the workforce while ensuring their children's well-being and early childhood education needs are met. Enhancing the quality of child care jobs by increasing their pay is another important action to take that can expand the child care workforce, and therefore, expand availability of child care.

Child care is an issue that has been echoed across almost every Listening Session, Community Convening, and Roundtable that Uplift has hosted. Child care is a topic that is critical not only to families' well-being but also the greater economy. Without access to affordable and culturally appropriate child care, many residents are unable to take on quality jobs. The lack of funding for child care is not unique to the Central Coast. A 2021 New York Times article compared the annual public spending per child in the United States (\$500) to other countries such as Spain (\$9,084), Austria (\$12,864), and Germany (\$18,656), highlighting the great divergence in spending on child care in the United States compared to Europe.⁷⁰

Access to affordable child care is a nationwide crisis, straining family budgets (when care can be secured) and workers' ability to participate in the labor market (when care cannot be secured). The latter burden typically falls disproportionately on women, impacting their quality of life and ability to succeed in the labor market. After taking time off from paid work to provide child care, employees may return to work for lesser pay than they may have earned if they were able to continue working. They may also lose additional support such as investments in retirement accounts, limiting their later ability to retire. Data confirms community input that demand for child care vastly exceeds open child care spaces throughout the Central Coast (see Figure 9 on page 35).

⁶⁶ Reference page number 58 in Uplift's *Regional Plan Part I* for more information on the child care sector.

⁶⁷ Jain S, Higashi RT, Salmeron C, Bhavan K., "The Intersection of Childcare and Health Among Women at a U.S. Safety-Net Health System During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Study," *Health Equity* 8:1, 32–38, DOI: 10.1089/heap.2023.0068.

⁶⁸ Usha Ranji, Brittni Frederiksen, Alina Salganicoff, and Michelle Long, "Women, Work, and Family During COVID-19: KFF Women's Health Survey," KFF, Mar 22, 2021, <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/women-work-and-family-during-covid-19-findings-from-the-kff-womens-health-survey/>.

⁶⁹ Caregivers of young children may include parents, foster parents, grandparents, guardians, and other adults responsible for children. Uplift is saying "caregivers of young children" instead of "parents" to be inclusive of all types of family and child care structures.

⁷⁰ Cain Miller, Claire, "How Other Nations Pay for Childcare. The U.S. Is an Outlier," *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/06/upshot/child-care-biden.html>.

EXAMPLE CHILD CARE INITIATIVE: THE ISABELLA PROJECT

The Isabella Project is a transformative, community-driven initiative dedicated to delivering highest-quality early childhood education and comprehensive support services to every child in Santa Paula, the largest and most geographically isolated city in the Santa Clara River Valley. As a pilot project of Ventura County Highest-Quality Early Childhood Education Initiative, the Isabella Project aims to directly benefit approximately 1,000 children and their families in Santa Paula while serving as a model for expanding these essential services throughout Ventura County and beyond. This initiative is especially crucial for the Santa Paula community, which faces serious challenges due to its low-income status and rural location, making access to vital educational resources more difficult.

Despite the availability of state and federal funding designed to support high-quality early childhood

education for every child in Santa Paula, more than two-thirds of these funds remain untapped due to infrastructure gaps and workforce shortages. The Isabella Project has evolved into a dynamic public-private-community partnership, engaging over 100 active partners who are committed to ensuring that every young child in Santa Paula has access to high-quality early education. The partnership's diverse membership includes parents, local government and school districts, community organizations like the Santa Paula Latino Town Hall and Poder Popular, as well as representatives from various sectors, including economic development, higher education, health, and business. Co-chaired by five diverse community leaders, the Isabella Project embodies the belief that success in Santa Paula can be replicated across Ventura County, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Child Care Strategies

- 1. Expand Child Care Workforce:** The Central Coast needs more people who are well compensated for the child care that they provide. Many center-based programs across the region are operating at reduced capacity due to the lack of a workforce. Increasing the region's base of child care providers could help make the child care system, and therefore the economy, more resilient. Apprenticeship programs, such as those offered by Hartnell's Campus Child Development Center, could be scaled to train a more robust child care and early childhood education workforce. When child care providers are suddenly unavailable, caregivers of young children, often mothers, can be forced to take time off from work. Creating a network of substitute child care providers who can fill in during these times can help avoid workforce disruption disproportionately impacting women. 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. This aligns with state strategies, such as the Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan, as well as Uplift's North Star.
- 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 and expediting permitting for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), 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. Enhancing child care infrastructure advances economic diversification and resilience by increasing availability of child care. Adequate space to provide child care is critical for increasing capacity and giving families quality options so caregivers of young children can more easily participate in the workforce. Increasing the supply of child care may also reduce the distance required to drive to and from the child care site, which will reduce greenhouse emissions in alignment with the state's carbon neutrality goals and strategies such as the California Climate Scoping Plan.

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. Over 75 percent of respondents to Uplift's Public Opinion Poll think that it is very important to prioritize employers that provide exceptional benefits, including child care, with 75.5 percent indicating that as "very important," 19.2 percent indicating that as somewhat important, and 5.1 percent indicating that as "not important." Providing child care on site could eliminate extra driving, reducing greenhouse emissions in alignment with the state's carbon neutrality goals and strategies such as the California Climate Scoping Plan. 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.

LOCAL EXAMPLES: FIRST 5 VENTURA COUNTY, EDC, AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC VENTURES (WEV)

In partnership with and funding from First 5 Ventura County, EDC operates a loan program that gives entrepreneurs access to the capital needed to create or expand preschools and child care centers. EDC Small Business Development Center advisors provide specialized assistance focused on the unique needs of family child care providers.

Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) Business of Care initiative offers free classes in English and Spanish to help participants learn the essential steps to start or expand their in-home child care businesses. After completing the course, participants may apply for a stipend to support the growth of their business.

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. With a variety of voucher programs, waiting lists, and requirements, it can be overwhelming to know where to begin. From home-based care to center-based care, caregivers of young children may also struggle to discern which options are preferred for their families. English-only resources, standard business hours, and inaccessibility can significantly complicate the child care search for families who speak languages other than English, work non-standard hours, or have children with specialized care needs. Expanding resources and outreach for and the 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. Outreach may be conducted by paid, trusted messengers like promotoras to conduct door-to-door outreach to families on the availability of affordable child care. Providing such resources may empower families with the information required to simplify their experience navigating the child care system, increasing enrollment in support programs from disinvested communities.



Climate Resilience through Economic and Workforce Strategies:

Meeting the Moment of
California's Climate Leadership

Alongside equitably increasing the presence of quality jobs on the Central Coast, the region has the opportunity to create jobs that support the climate-forward economy of our future. As a longstanding energy producer also boasting strong assets for the clean economy, the Central Coast is on the frontlines of the State of California's energy transition. Apart from the region's energy generation activities, climate change and energy policy hold considerable impacts for nearly every industry on the Central Coast, including the region's large traditional economic anchors.

Prioritizing quality jobs that advance the Central Coast's environmental sustainability and climate resilience will be a key part of setting up our region for long-term prosperity.

As a longstanding energy producer also boasting strong assets for the clean economy, the Central Coast is on the frontlines of the State of California's energy transition. With oil and gas headquarters activity in Santa Paula (in Ventura County) and major onshore/offshore operations in the southern sub-region of the Central Coast, the region is likely to experience employment impacts of the shift to cleaner energy sources. Oxnard (in Ventura County) and Morro Bay and Diablo Canyon (in San Luis Obispo County) are also home to major transmission infrastructure and legacy power plants, which register higher emissions than renewable sources. Meanwhile, the lifespan of Diablo Canyon—currently California's largest source of clean energy, only operating nuclear power plant, and San Luis Obispo County's largest private employer—has been extended, but the facility is still slated for shutdown by the end of this decade. Apart from these energy generation activities, climate change and energy policy hold considerable impacts for nearly every industry on the Central Coast, including the region's large traditional economic anchors (e.g., agriculture and hospitality and tourism).

Many of the region's industry, innovation, and infrastructure strengths have considerable relevance to the clean economy. Target sectors include advanced air mobility innovations that will reduce the environmental impact of air travel, industry utilization of hydrogen for reduced emissions, and emerging blue economy and clean tech activity. The Central Coast also is home to one of the world's largest solar farms, and major battery storage projects are in various stages of planning and development. Local jurisdictions are advancing electrification adoption and infrastructure development, driving potential for new green, resilient infrastructure jobs. Regional universities and defense installations are leaders in aspects of clean energy innovation.

The region also can claim the largest of two federally designated floating offshore wind energy areas in the state, which was leased in 2023 for a combined \$425 million to three global companies: Equinor, Ocean Winds, and Invenergy. Involved groups have collaborated in regional planning efforts to organize around floating offshore wind and the Central Coast's potential role in this new industry in areas such as surveying, operations and maintenance, ports, transmission, research and innovation, and workforce development. These efforts have been paralleled by the state's finalization of its Assembly Bill (AB) 525 Offshore Wind Strategic Plan in June 2024, which lays out infrastructure and other investments needed in the coming years. The offshore wind industry has experienced notable challenges in recent years including inflation, challenges in scaling up the needed supply chain and workforce, and energy affordability. While there is an acknowledgement of the industry's complexities, there has also been positive strides like deep tribal engagement and the protection of culturally significant waters during the offshore wind parcel selection. Furthermore, the state and federal government has provided strong support for offshore wind by investing substantial funding and aligning regulatory bodies required to move offshore wind forward. The scale and nature of the industry and its projects are well suited for tools like Project Labor, Community Workforce, and/or Community Benefits Agreements, which can promote development and employment of a local talent pipeline for quality jobs, as well as other enabling supports and broad community investments. Applying these mechanisms can help residents receive maximum economic value and environmental benefits from the presence of offshore wind.

LOCAL HIRE TOOLS

Project Labor Agreements, Community Workforce Agreements, and Community Benefits Agreements are examples of negotiated agreements between project leads (e.g., developers, owners, and contractors) and labor unions and/or community organizations. These agreements can be used to secure employment terms that support job quality, equity, and other benefits (e.g., investments in local workforce development, small businesses, and housing). In less populous areas, these agreements need to be carefully structured to ensure local workforce representation.

Project Labor Agreements specifically focus on employment on construction projects and are negotiated by unions. Community Workforce Agreements are a subset of Project Labor Agreements that specify local hire and related procurement equity outcomes (targeting training and outreach). Community Benefit Agreements can apply beyond construction projects, include a broader array of equity tools (e.g., support for housing, childcare, and community amenities), and can be negotiated by other community groups. Additional information on these tools can be found from the [U.S. Department of Labor](#).

Both policy decisions and regional and local investments will shape the likely-considerable employment and economic impacts of the clean energy transition on the Central Coast, with particular attention demanded to create just and equitable results. It will be important to mitigate economic impacts of industry transitions and invest in infrastructure and jobs to create pathways to economic benefit in new areas, ensuring that individuals and communities are not left behind. Engaging with entities such as waterfront communities, California Native American Tribes, labor, environmental organizations, fishing groups, local government, and education providers will also be crucial to ensuring that all residents—particularly those living in disinvested communities—have access to new jobs, subsidies, and other benefits.

Strategies for the Central Coast to seize this moment include:

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.

Tactics:

- Repurpose legacy and decommissioned energy infrastructure and assets to support job creation and economic activity, plus related goals of climate resilience and environmental justice.
- Facilitate public-private partnerships and other innovative models to mobilize funding for clean energy technology adoption, climate resilience, and sustainability efforts.
- Work with developers, supply chain, coastal communities, California Native American Tribes, state/federal regulators, and affected industries to increase carbon-free energy generation in the region in a way that optimizes economic opportunities for underserved communities and mitigates localized impacts.
- Engage with local governments to manage effects of the energy transition (e.g., shifts in tax revenue) and promote sharing of leading practices across jurisdictions.

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.

Tactics:

- Develop targeted workforce strategies to support workers affected by the energy transition and create pathways and programs for residents to pursue quality jobs in the new energy ecosystem, leveraging state and federal resources such as the Department of Energy’s Training for Residential Energy Contractors (TREC) Program. Expanding local capacity to equip the current and emerging workforce with skills associated with advancing quality, green infrastructure jobs strongly aligns with the state’s climate strategies, including decarbonization through electrification and residential solar, that advance local ownership and equity.

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.

Tactics:

- Build out administrative and capacity support systems to support customers’ ability to equitably access incentives, rebates, and financing for electrification of homes and vehicles.
- Provide technical assistance to improve uptake of energy efficient technologies and practices among small, mid-sized, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned businesses. Connect disinvested communities to opportunities in ClimateTech innovation, pathways for buildings and transportation electrification, and workforce development opportunities in the clean economy.
- Build capacity for and provide technical assistance to disinvested communities to effectively access existing and forthcoming programs that fund home weatherization updates, rooftop solar, and energy efficient appliances including cooling and electric panel upgrades. Such programs include the federally funded Home Energy Rebate Program, the Weatherization Assistance Program, the Solar for All program, and the California funded Equitable Building Decarbonization program. Residents could also benefit from receiving similar technical assistance to access the federally funded Training Residential Energy Contractors program to support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) small business owners access new enterprise creation and business expansion opportunities.



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.

Tactics:

- Build public-private partnerships to conserve land, increase green spaces, preserve working and agricultural lands, and protect coastal and wetland environments. Taken together, these tactics preserve the health and beauty of the Central Coast's natural environment which contributes to quality of life and protects especially vulnerable communities who experience the first and worst impacts of climate change.
- Collaborate with involved entities to develop and implement Indigenous-informed nature-based solutions to address climate risks while honoring the long traditions of water and land protection led by California Native American Tribes in the Central Coast. Create economic opportunities for California Native American Tribes while advancing culturally relevant natural resource strategies.
- Expand quality job opportunities among disinvested communities, with a particular emphasis on engaging Indigenous communities, focused on coastal habitat protection including wetlands, forests, grasslands, dune management, and fire mitigation and firefighting. Doing so may create meaningful, local job opportunities such as fire fighters, marine conservation program managers, and coastal restoration project managers, while managing the risk of sea level rise and wildfires.

- 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.

Tactics:

- Reduce current and future climate-related risks for agricultural producers and workers by providing curated technical assistance to adopt climate resilient agriculture practices like supporting and maintaining soil health, promoting carbon sequestration, sound water management practices, preparing for changing precipitation patterns, reducing pest and invasive plant pressure while promoting biodiversity, and regenerative farming techniques that reduce greenhouse gasses. See the Agriculture and Food Access and Security sections for more related strategies.
- Build upon workforce development programs and create conduits from workforce programs to quality jobs like apprenticeship programs with employers. Both public and private employers may create quality, local jobs managing natural resources, implementing strategies for building or transportation decarbonization, installing renewable energy technologies, and conducting other cross-sector, climate-driven activities.



Community Development Strategies

There are several topics beyond the scope of the California Jobs First focus of creating quality jobs and improving access to them, but foundational to a thriving, resilient community and quality of life for Central Coast residents. Paired with actions to increase presence of quality jobs and improve the quality of jobs within prominent industries, **Uplift’s research and community engagement clearly highlight the need to improve livability for Central Coast residents and lower barriers that have historically led to unequal outcomes with past economic development strategies.** While beyond the scope of what is typically considered economic development strategies, investing in strategies related to these topics is necessary for reaching Uplift’s equity goals and for achieving long-term economic security for the Central Coast.

Housing

Over half of residents surveyed in Uplift’s public opinion poll do not see a future for themselves on the Central Coast, despite the region’s strong community, natural beauty, and world-class industries.⁷¹ **Throughout Listening Sessions, residents consistently cited the high cost of housing as the greatest challenge they face.** This lack of attainable housing further exacerbates workforce shortages as employees simply cannot afford to live on the Central Coast. Addressing this challenge will require increasing the supply of housing, especially increasing housing that is price-restricted to be affordable at low and moderate income levels, and reducing barriers for home buyers.

Too many residents struggle as they are unable to access jobs that enable self-sufficiency and beset by unsustainable costs of living, largely attributable to housing. **Housing scarcity and affordability is an existential issue for the Central Coast, impacting**

resident livelihoods, industry competitiveness, and the region’s future. Driven by restrictive building policies, zoning regulations that inhibit high-density building, burdensome permitting processes, community opposition, lack of incentives for new construction, and the lack of funding for affordable, subsidized housing, the number of new housing units falls short of the region’s current and projected needs, especially the needs of lower and moderate-income workers. In addition to the housing strategies below, Uplift heard a strong desire for policy changes to ease permitting, incentivize more construction of housing, and increase the amount of funding for subsidized affordable housing. Prioritizing and fast tracking the permitting of housing projects that are 100 percent affordable was also mentioned as a strategy for remediating the inequity in housing production between affordable and market rate housing.

⁷¹ Of the 1,200 respondents to Uplift’s Public Opinion Poll, 32 percent chose “very likely,” and 22 percent chose “somewhat likely” to move away from the Central Coast region over the next few years.

“The teachers right now are talking about getting a fair wage. And we have a teacher that lives across the road, but the landlord just doubled the rent, so she has to move. So affordable housing is a problem. You know, it’s very, very difficult for people to live here. It’s very difficult for people to be able to have a job where they can actually live in the community and not have to commute for a long distance, so affordable housing [is a challenge].”

Listening Session hosted by Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP virtually

Housing Strategies

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. Employers may support employee housing at different levels. 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. Much of the Central Coast's workforce cannot afford to live in the county where they work. This includes those providing critical services to the community and economy such as educators, healthcare providers, child care providers, farmworkers,⁷² hospitality and tourism employees, and more. For example, a representative from the Santa Barbara Housing Authority shared that 30,000 people commute in and out of Santa Barbara daily to work. As a result of residents seeking attainable housing elsewhere, people spend more time away from their homes and families, diminishing their sense of community and belonging, all while contributing to increased traffic and greenhouse gas emissions. These consequences have compounding impacts on residents' mental, social, and environmental health, and puts a heavy strain on the workforce and employers due to challenges with employee retention. 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. Employer sponsored housing supports economic diversification and resilience by enabling the workforce to continue providing key services. Without employer sponsored housing offered, it is often unrealistic for employees to be able to afford to live nearby.

Therefore, providing employees with housing will increase access to jobs and decrease commute distances (i.e., Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)), which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with the state's carbon neutrality goals and the state's sustainability strategies such as the California Climate Scoping Plan. One example of this strategy already underway in the region is Santa Barbara Unified School District turning the Parma School into teacher and staff housing.⁷³ Another example, as shown in Figure 13, is Spreckels Crossing, which is housing for agricultural employees located in Monterey County.

**Figure 13: Spreckels Crossing—
Example of Employer Sponsored Housing**



Figure 13: Photo of Spreckels Crossing located in Spreckels, California (Monterey County). Tanimura & Antle built 100 units of housing for their seasonal agriculture employees. Source: <https://mbep.biz/housing/employer-sponsored-housing-agriculture>.

“For growers in the region, high housing costs make it hard to attract enough labor during harvest season. The housing projects that have been constructed can help the growers with this. While the housing is designed for single agricultural employee residents, mostly H2A employees, it can help to alleviate the housing pressure on existing stock where growers would need to go in order to provide housing for their harvest employees.”

⁷² When considering workforce housing for farmworkers and other workforces of other industries with pollutants, housing must be located close enough to work sites to be convenient for workers, but far enough to not pose health risks due to chemicals or other hazards.

⁷³ Callie Fausey, “Affordable Housing for Santa Barbara Unified Teachers and Staff Is in the Pipeline,” *The Independent*, April 24, 2024, <https://www.independent.com/2024/04/24/affordable-housing-for-santa-barbara-unified-teachers-and-staff-is-in-the-pipeline/>.

2. Promote Creative Housing Models: Uplift encourages promoting less traditional solutions to meet the region's housing needs. This may include repurposing underutilizing land or office buildings, modifying ownership models, and advancing alternative designs. Examples include Project Home Key and efforts in King City, Santa Cruz, and Salinas, in which models were used for temporary emergency housing and quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic and are now refurbished permanent homes with wrap-around services for those who were formerly experiencing homelessness. The scarcity of affordable housing in the Central Coast region leaves families with minimal choice other than finding creative 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. To maximize use of space and expand housing access, housing entities can connect with owners of vacant commercial, government, and even educational buildings to create affordable housing. Some spaces may be more suitable for cooperative or community owned housing and might be of interest by community land trusts, or nonprofits serving as stewards for land to advance affordable housing. Uplift encourages building partnerships and coordinating across other strategy areas to make this mutually beneficial for all involved parties. Creative housing models support economic diversification and resilience by enabling the workforce for key services to continue. Without additional affordable housing, it is often unrealistic for employees to be able to afford to live nearby. Increasing affordable housing availability will expand access to jobs by making it easier to live near them. Using vacant spaces to do so, perhaps even in a communal way, is a more efficient use of resources and is far more sustainable than new construction, aligning with the state's sustainability strategies such as the California Climate Scoping Plan, and the California Climate Adaptation Strategy.

“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

Education is a crucial component of creating an equitable and sustainable economy. With the rising costs of higher education and the limited quality job prospects on the Central Coast following a degree, many students are left with no choice but to leave the area or have difficulty finding a quality job. By providing access to education and training opportunities, especially for disinvested communities, graduates can be better prepared for taking on quality jobs and meeting the needs of local employers, the community, and their families. Education fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and growth in the region, and plays a transformative role in uplifting disinvested communities by breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting social mobility. Enhancing TK-12 and higher education in the Central Coast can drive innovation and skill development, aligning with California Jobs First by creating a pipeline of talented workers and supporting Uplift's focus on equitable access to educational opportunities.

CALIFORNIA AND TK: FOUNDATIONAL EARLY EDUCATION TO SET KIDS UP FOR SUCCESS

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is a state-wide, optional, free program for age-eligible four-year-old children intended to help them prepare for kindergarten. By the 2025–2026 school year, all four-year-old children will be eligible to enroll. This opportunity has great potential for equitably supporting children's longer-term educational success and therefore, life and professional success. With four-year-old children no longer requiring as much child care, child care providers are also facing the need to adjust.

Figure 14: Educational Attainment and Workers' Job Quality

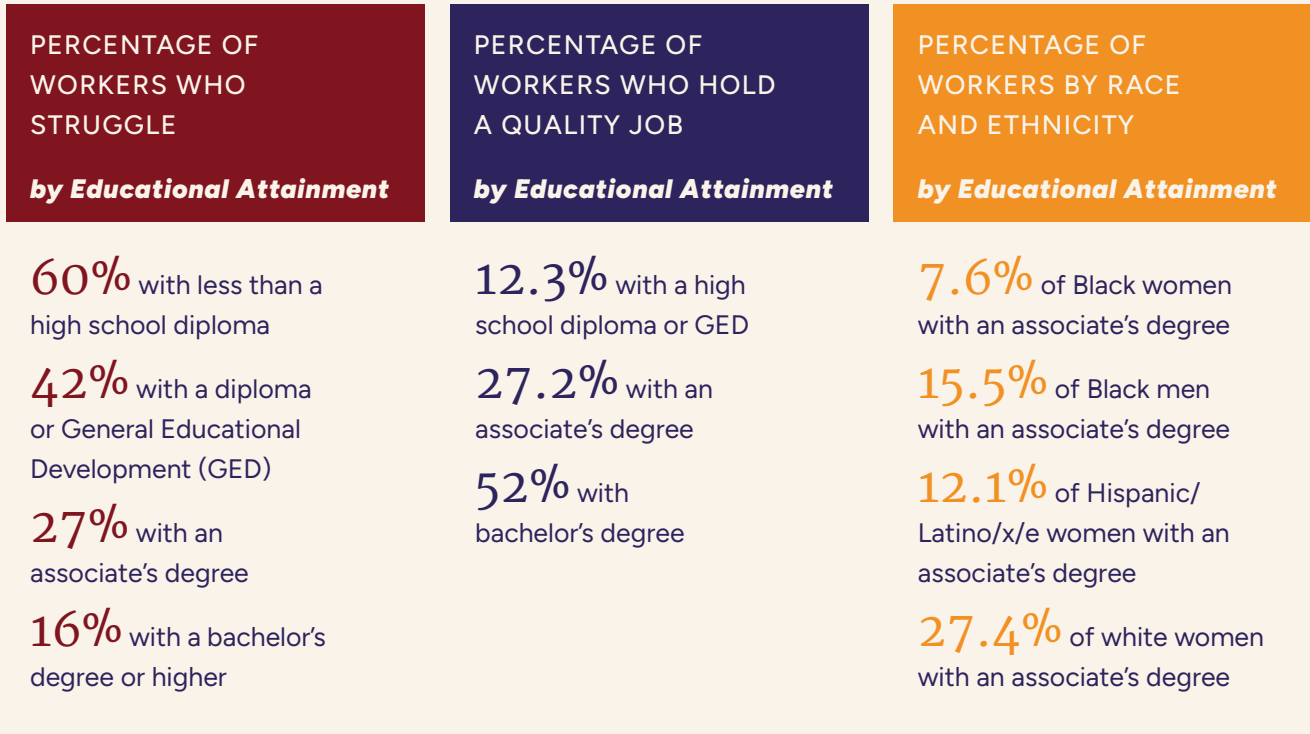


Figure 14: Percentage of workers who struggle by Educational Attainment and percentage of workers who hold a quality job by Educational Attainment and Race and Ethnicity. Source: Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey.

A strong education system attracts and retains critical members of the workforce while simultaneously cultivating the future workforce. Thus, education is inextricably linked to the economy. While residents across all educational attainment levels struggle to cover the cost of basic needs in the Central Coast, the racial and county disparities between educational attainment underscore prevailing inequalities across different demographics. As shown in Figure 14, these inequalities are further highlighted by the percentage of the population that is white whose highest level of education is a bachelor's degree compared to the population that is Hispanic or Latino/x/e whose highest level of education is less than ninth grade.⁷⁴

Educational institutions across the region have collaborated and coordinated with one another for decades on efforts to improve academic achievement and strengthen education-to-workforce pathways

through various initiatives. To address long-standing educational and economic inequities in the region, the Central Coast formed the K-16 Regional Collaborative: a collective impact initiative of K-12, Community College, California State University, University of California, and industry partners. This Collaborative has laid groundwork for transformative, equity-centered, systemic change along education-to-employment pathways for our socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Participating K-16 institutions recognize the imperative to reimagine the educational and social contract in our region with the needs, assets, strengths, and aspirations of our socioeconomically disadvantaged students and families at the center of our collective redesign to advance their opportunities for upward mobility. Uplift recommends the following strategies to supplement and support these and other efforts.

⁷⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, "Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over (Hispanic or Latino)," American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B15002I, 2022, Accessed on December 12, 2023. [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2022.B15002I?q=B15002I: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over \(Hispanic or Latino\)&g=050XX00US06053,06069,06079,06083,06087,06111](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2022.B15002I?q=B15002I: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over (Hispanic or Latino)&g=050XX00US06053,06069,06079,06083,06087,06111).

Resources for more cost-effective education provide great opportunities for the Central Coast as well. For example, Promise Programs such as those offered by Hartnell College, Cuesta College, and Allan Hancock College, offer tuition-free enrollment for first-time students regardless of family income. Additionally, the growing prevalence of certifications and online education programs provides more flexibility and education access, potentially alleviating students' needs to pay for housing. Such flexibility may open possibilities such as working a full or part-time job, caregiving, and learning at a customized pace.

UPLIFT AND THE CENTRAL COAST K-16 REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE

Learning from Uplift's Vision and Steering Committee Members who are part of the Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative has been a highly valued opportunity. From refining our understanding of the relationship between K-16 education and the economy to informing our visioning and strategy development process, applying proven practices and concepts has served Uplift well.



TK-12 & Higher Education Strategies

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. Uplift’s industry and community-based research both illuminated the importance of starting earlier when it comes to preparing students for the current and future needs of the workforce, proactively enabling them for their own success as well. Recent State of California funding is incentivizing K-12 districts serving socioeconomically disadvantaged students to prioritize the development of pathways that lead to high wage, high demand jobs in their region. As an example, at Pajaro Valley Unified School District in Watsonville, California, there are over 20 career

technical education pathways, including pathways to sustainable agriculture, biotechnology, health, and engineering careers. Additional tactics may include offering targeted tutoring and access centers to help youth catch up academically; many are still behind due to learning loss experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students, particularly those from disinvested communities, may also benefit from learning opportunities on rapid and sustained technology innovations and related economic opportunities (e.g., focus on data literacy, STEM education, AI) and career pathways based on such competencies. Curriculum modernization could also include education on topics such as the value of local cultures through language, food, and tradition immersion; local ecological information, sustainable practices, and climate resilience actions; and financial planning/budgeting, saving, and investing. This strategy aligns with the Workforce component of the State of California Department of Education Expanded Learning Division (EXLD) Strategic Plan 2.0.

“Schools should refer students to ‘a bank of jobs’ to be the bridge for those that finish school and are looking for a job.”

Listening Session hosted by Action Council in Monterey County

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. Whether it is preparing for trade schools with high-wage potential post-certifications, community colleges, University of California, or and California State schools, raising awareness of how to get from high school to the next step can make a profound difference in a students' trajectory. Preparation may include raising awareness of education costs and grant/scholarship programs (e.g., eligibility for Pell Grants and tuition and housing assistance) and scholarships for aged-out foster youth so they can go back to school later in life if desired. Furthermore, Uplift suggests expanding access, awareness, and adoption of CAL KIDS, a program that helps every baby receive a starting savings account for housing and higher education. This strategy aligns with the equity elements of California's Quality Schooling Framework.



“I invested four and a half years in [my child’s] education but came out feeling like it wasn’t worth it because she graduated but didn’t have experience for her career. It was difficult to apply for jobs.”

Listening Session hosted by Action Council in Monterey County

Transportation

The Central Coast faces considerable transportation challenges that impact the community, economy, and environment. With Highway 101 acting as an artery for moving people, agricultural products, and goods through California, maintaining the region's transportation systems is crucial for economic growth and prosperity, and the community's welfare. Throughout Listening Sessions, the lack of reliable public transportation, the rising cost of fuel, and long and traffic laden commutes, which are often exacerbated by road closures, arose as prominent challenges. Research shows that longer commute times were associated with lower job and leisure time satisfaction, increased strain, and poor mental health.⁷⁵ Similar to much of California, there is insufficient public transportation on the Central Coast. This forces residents into cars, further exacerbating the climate crisis. Individuals without access to cars are cut off from potential job opportunities and overall mobility. Additionally, historically underserved communities are disproportionately impacted by these transportation shortcomings and face increased exposure to air pollution, as echoed in the California Transportation Commission's Racial Equity Statement.⁷⁶ Air pollution causes respiratory problems like aggravated asthma, cardiovascular risks such as heart attacks and hypertension, developmental health issues, and an increased risk of cancers, especially lung cancer.⁷⁷

Additionally, extreme weather events have impacted transportation systems in the region, notably the recurring closures of Highway 1, impacting goods movement, traffic conditions, and entire communities' ability to move freely. For example, the most recent rockslide that occurred south of Monterey caused a closure of part of Highway 1, which has had notable economic and logistical implications. Residents who live in Big Sur were almost entirely cut off in both directions for more than a month. There has been a string of closures, including a bridge collapse and a mudslide on Highway 1 in 2017 that left one section of Big Sur accessible only by foot for eight months. The heavy rains of another El Niño in early 2023 caused the landslide that closed access from the south. Between 2016 and 2023, Caltrans spent \$350 million in unplanned emergency work in the area. The state's tourism agency, Visit California, estimated that the 2017 road closure in Big Sur cost businesses from Los Angeles to San Francisco almost half a billion dollars.⁷⁸ Therefore, enhancing the quality and resilience of transportation systems on the Central Coast is a key component to strengthening the resilience of the region's economy and well-being.

⁷⁵ Libin Han, Chong Peng, Zhenyu Xu, "The Effect of Commuting Time on Quality of Life: Evidence from China", National Center for Biotechnology Information, December 29, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9819363/>.

⁷⁶ The California Transportation Commission's Racial Equity Statement states that "Californians who live in historically underserved communities are more likely to be negatively impacted by increased exposure to air pollution and noise from cars, trucks, ships, trains, and aircraft, and struck or killed by drivers when walking and biking. These vulnerable communities may have limited access to safe and affordable transportation options to connect residents to jobs, education, healthcare, and recreation."

⁷⁷ "CDC Transportation Recommendations: Improve Air Quality", The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention, August 14, 2023 <https://www.cdc.gov/transportation/improve-air-quality.html#:~:text=Transportation%2Drelated%20air%20pollutants%20are,lung%20function%2C%20and%20increased%20hospitalization.>

⁷⁸ Emily Witt, "The Precarious Future of Big Sur's Highway 1: How climate change is threatening one of the country's most famous roadways", The New Yorker, May 17, 2024, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-precocious-future-of-big-surs-highway-1>.

“Aquí sólo con un coche pueden moverse las personas. Implementen rutas más cortas que se ajusten a los horarios laborales. Más movimiento de transporte.”

English Translation: "Here people can only move with a car. Put shorter routes with respect to the work schedule. More movement of transport."

Listening Session hosted by Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) virtually

Transportation Strategies

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. In areas with limited access, such as San Benito County, which is primarily served by the heavily trafficked, single-lane Highways 25 and 156, adding additional transportation options can greatly benefit the local 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. When developing and upgrading public transportation, it is imperative that these systems are designed to be accessible for all, especially for people with disabilities. Such enhancements reduce VMT,⁷⁹ provide more options for residents to access quality jobs, and decrease pollution. This strategy aligns with California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050 and the goals highlighted in the State of California Climate Resilience Improvement Plan for Transportation. This also aligns with the California Climate Adaption Strategy's goal to promote sustainable land use planning and transportation investments, as well as the state's goal of carbon neutrality by 2045.

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 an additional financial challenge 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. The use of public transportation, rather than personal vehicles, reduces emissions further enhancing the state's sustainability strategies, such as California's 30x30 Initiative and California Climate Scoping Plan.

Marketing efforts, specifically targeted to disinvested communities, can also be implemented to make community members aware of the existing transportation subsidies, reduced fare options, and how to apply to and collect these subsidies. Additionally, transportation agencies can partner with CBOs to disseminate information to disinvested and typically hard to reach communities. Programs like this exist in California, such as LA Metro's Low-Income Fare is Easy (LIFE) program, where individuals who earn \$44,150 a year or less, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), can qualify for free or discounted fares.

⁷⁹ The Department of Transportation defines Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as the total annual miles of vehicle travel divided by the total population in a state or in an urbanized area. Source: <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/vmt-capita>.

“To get a disabled bus pass, there’s a ton of red tape. Two years later, I haven’t heard anything back. I have to walk everywhere. I’m relearning how to ride a bike and trying to do it safely because I can’t get on the bus. There should be low-income passes as well or make them more available.”



Immigration

The Central Coast is home to many documented and undocumented immigrants. In 2019, immigrants composed 27 percent of the State of California's total population and contributed \$37.7 billion to state and local taxes, \$77.7 billion to federal taxes, and had \$291 billion in spending power.⁸⁰ Furthermore, in 2021 across California, which is the 5th largest economy in the world, about 32 percent of all workers in the labor force were immigrants and 38.9 percent of entrepreneurs were also immigrants.⁸¹ To that end, supporting the integration and success of immigrants in the Central Coast is essential for enhancing the region's economic stability and social cohesion. Work in the immigration sector involves providing services and programs that facilitate immigrants' integration, improve their economic opportunities, and enhance their rights and well-being. The development of strategies in this sector is driven by the need for accessible resources, financial support, education, and language training. The region benefits from a network of community organizations, educational institutions,

and local government initiatives dedicated to supporting immigrants. The sector's growth is characterized by increasing economic diversification, social inclusion, and resilience, ensuring that immigrants can fully participate in and contribute to the community.

The immigration strategies align with job quality and access and equity by enhancing job quality through accessible services and education, promoting equity by providing support and resources to immigrants, and fostering a culturally diverse and inclusive community. They promote social resilience by helping immigrants get tools and knowledge to navigate their new environment and contribute to the local economy. In terms of workforce development, these strategies aim to equip immigrants with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the workforce, support entrepreneurship, and positively impact the community. Additionally, they encourage lifelong learning and professional development, helping immigrants to advance economically and socially.

⁸⁰ "Economic Contributions: Immigrant Californians are building up the fifth largest economy in the world," California Immigrant Data Portal, <https://immigrantdata.ca.org/indicators/economic-contributions>.

⁸¹ Brookings and Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample.

Immigration Strategies

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. By streamlining access to these critical services, especially in areas where they are currently lacking, the center can assist immigrants as they navigate challenges and ensure their needs are met through an infrastructure of comprehensive 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. Immigrants often struggle with accessing traditional financial services due to a lack of credit history or understanding of the U.S. financial system. By offering microloans, immigrants can more easily start and expand small businesses, fostering entrepreneurship and local economic growth. Financial literacy training may cover budgeting, saving, investing, and understanding credit, which are crucial for long-term financial stability and success.

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. Many immigrants are unaware of their legal rights and protections in the workplace, making them vulnerable to exploitation and unsafe working conditions. Educational programs will provide workshops, seminars, and informational materials to educate immigrants about their rights. Mentorship programs will pair immigrants with experienced professionals who can guide them through career development, workplace challenges, and personal growth, helping them advocate for themselves and contribute to a fairer and more just labor market.



Arts and Culture

The Central Coast boasts a vibrant arts scene, featuring renowned performing arts organizations like El Teatro Campesino and diverse venues such as the Santa Barbara Bowl, Vina Robles Amphitheatre, and Rubicon Theatre. Festivals, including the Monterey Jazz Festival, are celebrated for their role in hiring artists, fostering community engagement, and boosting travel and tourism. The arts scene is enriched by the contributions of Indigenous and the region's large Hispanic/Latino/x/e communities, whose efforts are often overlooked due to systemic racism. Collectively, this creative economy delivers substantial societal and economic benefits to the region.

Studies by America for the Arts were conducted for Santa Cruz County, the City of Santa Cruz, the City of Watsonville, and Monterey County.⁸² One of these studies found that the total the nonprofit arts and culture industry in Santa Cruz County generated \$68 million in economic activity in 2022,⁸³ and in Monterey County over \$284 million.⁸⁴ At a city level, this number was over \$38 million in Santa Cruz⁸⁵ and just over \$8 million in Watsonville,⁸⁶ which can also highlight some of the socio-economic differences between the counties. EDC and the Ventura County Community Foundation commissioned a study that highlighted the creative economy's impact on the economy in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. The study highlighted that the creative economy sustained

more than 38,000 total jobs (over 5 percent of the total employment in both counties), generated over \$6.5 billion in total economic output, and contributed to over \$340 million in fiscal revenue.⁸⁷ This data shows that further cultivating the arts and culture sector can have important benefits for the Central Coast's economy.

On top of the economic benefits that the creative economy contributes to the region, art has a profound impact on youth development, well-being, and mental health. Arts education offers substantial benefits, and it is associated with lower dropout rates and better academic outcomes such as improved GPA and standardized test scores.⁸⁸ Art also serves as a crucial medium for raising awareness on various issues from sustainability to cultural vitality. Despite the economic and societal benefits, many arts institutions remain underfunded, and equitable access to arts education remains an issue that continues to negatively impact disinvested communities. While the intersection of art and technology, such as visual design, creates some opportunities for quality jobs, there is a notable disparity in the art sector's number of quality jobs. Despite the considerable value added to the region, art-related jobs often lack quality in terms of pay, benefits, and security.

⁸² Please note that data was not available for Ventura County, Santa Barbara County, San Luis Obispo County, San Benito County, or any other cities on the Central Coast.

⁸³ "Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic & Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations & Their Audiences in Santa Cruz County, CA", America for the Arts, October 12, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KcId9jeqQsS32S6Pyug-jDVPP4EyVmF7/view>.

⁸⁴ "Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic & Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations & Their Audiences in Monterey County, CA", America for the Arts, October 12, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KXj4CYpI9FDsx13nxOqnnJf6ztFjBf4p/view>.

⁸⁵ "Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic & Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations & Their Audiences in City of Santa Cruz, CA", America for the Arts, October 12, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EHJitrPkBvAjES3ArGpldPdQV4IV5Mvv/view>.

⁸⁶ "Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic & Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations & Their Audiences in City of Watsonville, CA", America for the Arts, October 12, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SDQhXsFw-wJEOLu4mkxrG8ORWFh5oBFR/view>.

⁸⁷ "The 2020 Report on the Ventura and Santa Barbara Creative Economies", Institute for Applied Economics Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), [The-2020-Report-on-the-Ventura-and-Santa-Barbara-Creative-Economies.pdf](https://www.laedc.com/2020-Report-on-the-Ventura-and-Santa-Barbara-Creative-Economies.pdf) (edcollaborative.com).

⁸⁸ Brown, K., "The Arts and Dropout Prevention: The Power of Art to Engage", National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, www.dropoutprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/arts-dropout-prevention-2018-10.pdf.

Arts and Culture Strategies

- 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. Throughout California there are already efforts to enhance and grow the arts and culture sector. For example, the Central Coast Creative Corps is a new grant opportunity funded by the California Arts Council. The grant will provide \$140,000 to 23 year-long projects. \$100,000 of each grant goes directly to an artist collaborating with a community-based organization.⁸⁹
- 2. Revitalize Art and Cultural :** 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. Various projects are underway across the Central Coast to build or restore art and cultural centers. Notable examples include the Royal Theatre in Guadalupe, the Lompoc Theatre, and the Corazon del Pueblo Cultural Arts Center in Downtown Santa Maria. The Royal Theater, in Guadalupe, a federally designated

historic building, was owned by a Japanese American family until they were sent to internment camps during World War II. The revitalization project aims to transform the historic building into a state-of-the-art movie theater, amphitheater, and performing arts center, hosting live performances, musical events, educational programs, and providing a meeting space for local organizations.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the Lompoc Theatre Project Corporation is raising funds to restore and reopen the Lompoc Theatre, aiming to make it a hub of arts, culture, and entertainment that will also help revitalize downtown.⁹¹ In Santa Maria, discussions are ongoing about adding a 600-seat performing arts theater to support downtown revitalization efforts.⁹²

EXAMPLE OF A STATE-WIDE INITIATIVE: THE CLEAN CALIFORNIA PROGRAM

At the intersection of arts and community revitalization is the state-wide Clean California program. "Since its inception in July 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom's \$1.2 billion Clean California initiative has restored beauty, rejuvenated community pride, and celebrated regional identities across the state. Along with clearing more than 2.6 million cubic yards of litter over the past three years, Clean California is also leaving an enduring legacy with all kinds of art installations that capture local culture."

Source: <https://dot.ca.gov/news-releases/news-release-2024-029>.

⁸⁹ The Central Coast Creative Corps, <https://www.centralcoastcreativecorps.org/about>.

⁹⁰ Taylor O'Connor, "Guadalupe Royal Theater Bond Measure Fails During Second Reading," The Santa Maria Sun, July 4, 2024, <https://www.santamariasun.com/news/guadalupe-royal-theater-bond-measure-fails-during-second-reading-15793317>

⁹¹ The Lompoc Theatre, <https://lompoctheatre.org/>

⁹² City of Santa Maria considering Performing Arts Center for Downtown revitalization, January 25, 2024, News Channel 3-12, <https://keyt.com/news/2024/01/25/city-of-santa-maria-considering-performing-arts-center-for-downtown-revitalization/>

“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

The Central Coast is home to over 1.2 million residents in disinvested communities, and the nonprofit sector is crucial to serving these communities. Supported by community foundations, nonprofits on the Central Coast provide a range of services. For example, Uplift has partnered with CBOs which have played a vital role in facilitating community connections throughout the California Jobs First planning phase. Despite the excellent services that nonprofits provide to the communities that

they serve, in many instances, nonprofits are not able to provide quality jobs for their own employees. This trend has serious implications for than 1.2 million nonprofits employees in California, accounting for 7 percent of all California employment.⁹³ Supporting nonprofits aligns with California Jobs First by filling gaps in services, promoting social equity, and fostering community engagement, which are central to Uplift's vision of sustainable, equitable economic growth.

⁹³ "Causes Count: The Economic Power of California's Nonprofit Sector" California Association of Nonprofits & The Nonprofit Institute, 2019.

“We see anti-poverty organizations creating poverty in their own organizations.”

Nonprofits and Funders Roundtable hosted by Uplift virtually

Nonprofit Strategies

- 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 a metric for successful board composition. Providing equitable access to nonprofit positions may include engaging in intentional programs dedicated to increasing diversity and representation. Hiring more representative employees, creating infrastructure for more inclusive employment practices (e.g., pay equity, disability accommodations, anti-discrimination policies, etc.), expanding resources available for nonprofit board leadership training, and engaging in open and equitable conversations about lack of diversity in the sector are efforts critical to advancing root cause work among nonprofits and achieving alignment with the communities' that they are committed to serving.
- 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. Additionally, refining financial management skills across the sector may be achieved by offering resources and funding mechanisms that improve nonprofits' cash flow management, understanding of grant activities, and financial governance. Comprehensive training programs for board members and nonprofit management could be included. Increasing investment in nonprofit infrastructure, including facilities and ownership, can ensure they have the space needed at an affordable rate. Moreover, boosting infrastructure investments in data and evaluation to better inform and drive their impact is a viable option. Enhancing the business skills of nonprofit leaders, aligning their compensation with their responsibilities, and encouraging innovative funding models akin to business ventures are also possible approaches. These could promote scaling, impact, and service innovation, and extend to board members by increasing stipends to enhance access, diversity, and participation in nonprofit governance.



A Path Forward:

Institutionalizing Community-Led,
Climate Forward Planning

The strategies outlined in this report provide a visionary and holistic community informed roadmap for cultivating a resilient and prosperous Central Coast economy. To effectively implement these strategies and enhance the Central Coast’s economy in a sustainable, equitable, and climate forward manner, a comprehensive approach involving key entities, adequate funding, governance structure, oversight, and measurable outcomes is essential. This section outlines the necessary steps to bring these strategies to fruition to help build a Central Coast that thrives economically and socially while addressing environmental sustainability.

Continued Community Engagement

Engaging a diverse group of community members and involved entities to coordinate and lead implementation of these strategies will be critical to the strategies' success. In addition to ongoing engagement with the California Jobs First constituencies, additional entities to involve in strategy implementation include:

- **Diverse Communities:** Leaders and representatives from immigrant, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and disinvested populations will ensure that the strategies are implemented in ways that are culturally sensitive and effectively meet the communities' needs.
- **California Native American Tribes:** Representatives from Central Coast California Native American Tribes will ensure that the strategies respect tribal sovereignty, cultural heritage, and address the specific needs of the region's Indigenous communities.
- **Federal, State, and Local Government and Agencies:** City and county officials, regional planning agencies, public health departments, and other government entities are essential for policy support and resource allocation.
- **Labor:** Representatives from workers, trade unions, and labor unions of top industries will provide critical perspectives necessary to inform strategy implementation.
- **Industry:** Top employers in target sectors must be engaged to effectively implement target sector strategies.
- **Educational and Research Institutions:** Schools, community colleges, universities, and vocational training centers will play a crucial role in developing the future workforce, providing educational opportunities for immigrants, and conducting research on topics such as the intersection of climate resilience, adaptation, and equity.
- **Community Organizations:** Community organizations such as nonprofits, immigrant advocacy groups, and social service organizations can offer on-the-ground support, ensure that community voices are heard, and advocate for their needs to be met.
- **Healthcare Providers:** Hospitals, clinics, and health networks are necessary to address the healthcare strategies and improve access and quality of care.
- **Business Community:** Local businesses, chambers of commerce, workforce development boards, and industry associations can provide employment opportunities and support economic growth.
- **Financial Institutions:** Banks, credit unions, and microfinance organizations can facilitate financial inclusion and support entrepreneurial ventures.
- **Philanthropy:** Community foundations, endowments, charitable trusts, and private donors including angel investors can support providing funds required for project to implement strategies.



Funding

Adequate funding is essential to catalyze these initiatives. A call for applications (RFPs) will be issued for projects that align with the strategies listed in this report. Broad and sustained effort is needed to attract and secure additional funding to support strategies and uplift disinvested communities for the long term. Additional funding sources may include:

- **Government Grants:** Federal, state, and local government grants specifically aimed at economic development, equity, sustainability, healthcare, and immigrant integration can provide crucial financial support.
- **Private Sector:** Contributions from businesses, philanthropic organizations, and corporate social responsibility funds can drive innovation and resource allocation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborative funding models that leverage resources from both public and private sectors can maximize impact and sustainability.
- **Nonprofit Organizations:** Grants and funding from nonprofit foundations dedicated to community development and social equity can provide essential resources.

Governance Structure

Strategy lays out key guideposts to support implementation by organizations and agencies across the Central Coast region. Governance may include committees as required by the state as well as ad-hoc sub-committees. Strategy implementation will also have oversight, including project and fiscal management, monitoring and evaluation, and regular reporting to key entities involved and the public.

Creation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is crucial for measuring the success and impact of the strategies. KPIs will be developed for each project and may include:

- **Economic Impact:** Economic contributions such as job creation, and business startups.
- **Social Impact:** Improvements in equitable access to services, educational attainment, and community integration.
- **Environmental Impact:** Adoption of sustainable practices, retention of natural resources, and reduction in carbon footprint.

By co-creating with community members and engaging key involved entities, securing necessary funding, establishing a strong governance structure, ensuring effective oversight, and creating measurable KPIs, the Central Coast can successfully implement the strategies included in this plan.

Conclusion

The strategies outlined in this report provide a visionary and holistic roadmap for cultivating a resilient and prosperous Central Coast economy. The Target Sector Strategies focus on elevating critical industries—precision manufacturing, advanced business services, healthcare, and agriculture—through initiatives that accelerate workforce pipeline development, enhance STEM education, and support small business growth. These strategies are key to ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of small and middle-market businesses, which are the backbone of the regional economy.

Economic Mobility Strategies aim to dismantle barriers to opportunity, advancing equity across all sectors through comprehensive initiatives in entrepreneurship, workforce training, and child care. By promoting economic mobility and inclusivity, these strategies are designed to create a more equitable economic landscape where everyone, regardless of background, has the chance to succeed on the Central Coast.

The Climate Resilience through Economic and Workforce Strategies are designed not only to stimulate equitable green job creation but also to align the region with ambitious clean energy goals, build a skilled clean energy workforce, and ensure that all communities benefit from the transition to a clean economy. By enhancing climate resilience and prioritizing environmental protection, these strategies place the Central Coast at the forefront of sustainable development and resilience.

Community Development Strategies address the essential social infrastructure—housing, education, transportation, immigration, arts and culture, and nonprofits—that underpins a vibrant and inclusive region. These strategies ensure that the Central Coast remains not only a thriving economic hub but also a place where quality of life is accessible to all residents.

These interconnected strategies are crafted to drive long-term economic opportunity, sustainability, and equity. By placing the needs of underserved and historically marginalized communities at the center of this plan, Uplift is setting a bold course towards a future where economic growth is shared and inclusive. This process has been a profound reflection of 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 every voice contributes to shaping the region's future.

Institutionalizing these strategies will position the Central Coast as a beacon of sustainable regional development, where economic progress is seamlessly integrated with environmental stewardship and social equity. This strategic vision promises not only to catalyze immediate economic gains but also to lay the groundwork for a legacy of prosperity, resilience, and inclusivity that will benefit generations to come. As the Central Coast embarks on this transformative journey, it sets an inspiring example for regions across the U.S., demonstrating that a balanced approach to economic growth—rooted in equity and sustainability—can create a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

Annex

Annex 1: Glossary

- **Advanced Air Mobility (AAM):** A rapidly emerging, new sector of the aerospace industry which aims to safely and efficiently integrate highly automated aircraft into the National Airspace System (NAS). AAM is not a single technology, but rather a collection of new and emerging technologies being applied to the aviation transportation system, particularly in new aircraft types.⁹⁴
- **Annual Self-Sufficiency Standard (or Living Wage):** An annual compensation calculation established by analysis of regional costs that allows families to make ends meet while accumulating long-term and emergency savings.
- **Agriculture Technology (AgTech):** The use of technology to improve the efficiency, profitability, and sustainability of agriculture, horticulture, and aquaculture. AgTech can include devices, machines, sensors, and information technology. Some examples of AgTech include robotics, temperature and moisture sensors, aerial images, GPS technology, autonomous tractors, drones, predictive analytics, machine learning, and Artificial intelligence.⁹⁵
- **Blue Technology (Blue Tech):** The application of technologically enabled devices, systems, and platforms (e.g., sensors) to the marine environment for purposes such as ocean monitoring, exploration, and conservation. Broader “blue economy” activities, such as aquaculture, are also sometimes considered blue tech functions.
- **California Jobs First:** A program developed by the State of California’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) to promote a sustainable and equitable recovery from the economic distress of COVID-19 by supporting new plans and strategies to diversify local economies and develop sustainable industries that create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians.
- **California Jobs First Regional Collaborative:** Uplift’s governing body, inclusive regional planning groups that consist of a balanced and meaningful representation from regional stakeholders. The constituency groups that are represented include: Labor Organizations, Grassroots and Community Based Organizations, Employers, Businesses, Business Associations, Government Agencies, Economic Development Agencies, Philanthropic Organizations, Education and Training Providers, Workforce Entities, Environmental Justice Organizations, Worker Centers, Disinvested Communities, and California Native American Tribes. Uplift’s California Jobs First Regional Collaborative is made up of the Vision and Regional Steering Committees.
 - a. **Vision Committee:** Consists of 10 members who represent the 12 California Jobs First-specified stakeholder groups and six counties. The Vision Committee meets monthly to guide Uplift and Steering Committees. They focus on aligning projects with California Jobs First’s objectives through racial equity and social justice, ensuring accountability, and engaging community members by disseminating information and opportunities.
 - b. **Regional Steering Committee:** Composed of two Sub-regional Steering Committees that convene monthly and include representatives from the 12 California Jobs First-specified stakeholder groups. They guide Uplift’s planning process, set criteria and priorities, engage stakeholders, and recommended strategies for inclusion this report, for which they also have final approval authority.

⁹⁴ “Section 6. Advanced Air Mobility” The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Advanced Air Mobility (faa.gov).

⁹⁵ “What is AgTech,” Monarch Tractor, September 6, 2023, <https://www.monarchtractor.com/blog/what-is-ag-tech>.

- Catalyst Predevelopment Phase:** Formerly referred to as the “Catalyst Program” or “Catalyst Fund” it is a program within California Jobs First that allocates up to \$9 million to each of the 13 California Jobs First regions for project predevelopment activities. These investments are intended to bridge the gap between planning and implementation and enable regions to develop ready-to-go projects that can compete for funding opportunities from federal, state, and private sources. The Catalyst Program would also help the California Jobs First program funding reach communities sooner while providing the flexibility to develop projects that meet regional needs. The goal of funding Catalyst Predevelopment Phase projects, as shared by the State of California, is to invest in industries that will advance priorities identified during the Planning Phase, fund projects that ensure workers and disinvested communities are the primary beneficiaries, and to leverage federal, state, and private dollars.
- Community Based Organization (CBO):** An entity, typically a nonprofit, whose purpose is supporting or improving a community generally or in a specific way/ for a specific group of people within the community.
- Community Engagement Session:** Community-focused meetings including Listening Sessions, Community Convenings, or Community Updates.
- Community Convening:** Large, generalized public sessions to provide information, address questions, and solicit suggestions about Uplift and California Jobs First planning and implementation.
- Community Updates:** Uplift-hosted virtual meetings to update the public on the implementation of California Jobs First for the Central Coast.
- Disadvantaged Communities as defined by SB535 Tracts:** The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) formally designated four categories of geographic areas as components of disadvantage: 1.) Census tracts receiving the highest 25 percent of overall scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0. 2.) Census tracts lacking overall scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0 due to data gaps but receiving the highest 5 percent of CalEnviroScreen 4.0 cumulative pollution burden scores. 3.) Census tracts identified in the 2017 DAC designation as disadvantaged, regardless of their scores in CalEnviroScreen 4.0. 4.) Lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes. CalEPA created the Disadvantaged Communities Map which can be accessed here: <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535>.
- Disinvested Communities:** California Jobs First defines ‘disinvested communities’ as Census tracts identified as ‘disadvantaged’ by the California Environmental Protection Agency; Census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with the median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 of the California Health and Safety Code; ‘high poverty area’ and ‘high unemployment area’ as designated by the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development California Competes.
- Educational Attainment:** The level of formal education that an individual receives (e.g., graduating high school or college). Uplift acknowledges that this system does not capture other ways of receiving valuable education such as learning from peers, elders, or independently.
- Environmental Study:** Examination of how an activity may impact the environment including air, water, and land pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, human and non-human animal health effects, wildlife, and habitat effects, etc.

- **Food Apartheid:** A term that describes a system of food segregation based on race, geography, and economic status, leading to unequal access to healthy and affordable food. This concept moves beyond just the availability of food to address the root causes such as systemic racism, urban planning, and socio-economic disparities that affect access to nutritious food. Many activists argue that food apartheid better reflects the structural injustices and disparities in food access faced by low-income communities and communities of color. The term apartheid refers to racial segregation that was enforced by law in South Africa from 1948 to 1994, and its use underscores that similar systems of oppression are responsible for food insecurity.
- **Food Desert:** A geographic area where residents have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly a lack of whole foods such as fruits and vegetables. These areas are typically found in urban neighborhoods or rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Residents in these areas often rely on fast food restaurants or convenience stores that offer processed and less nutritious options.
- **Food Scarcity:** A situation where there is an insufficient supply of food, leading to a lack of access to the necessary quantity and quality of food needed for a healthy life. This can be caused by various factors including environmental issues, economic instability, agricultural problems, or political conflicts.
- **Feasibility Study:** Examination of practicality of an effort's success which considers factors such as available human and financial resources, political climate, and logistic complexity.
- **Higher Education:** Education that occurs after secondary school at institutions that offer degrees or certificates beyond the high school level. This includes studies at institutions such as colleges, universities, and technical schools.
- **Listening Session:** Mid-sized stakeholder-specific sessions tailored to receive feedback from a specific community, with priority for communities that have been historically left out of economic development planning processes.
- **Opportunity Jobs:** An opportunity job is a job that provides opportunities for workers to earn a livable wage. These jobs are either quality jobs or promising jobs.
 - c. **Quality Jobs:** A job that (1) 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; (2) offers employer-sponsored health insurance (a proxy for other worker benefits); and (3) provides worker stability in terms of retaining or leading to another quality job in the future. Jobs that do not meet this definition are often still highly valued and important roles that meaningfully contribute to the community. 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/or is physically and psychologically safe.
 - d. **Promising Jobs:** A job that does not meet all the above components (e.g., this job might not pay a living wage or provide benefits) but does provide a pathway to a quality job within the next ten years.
- **Project:** A specific effort undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result. It is a concrete implementation of strategy to achieve a specific outcome within a defined scope and timeframe.

- **Promotoras:** A term typically used within Hispanic or Latino/x/e communities to refer to community health workers. These individuals are often female and work primarily in community based settings. They play a crucial role in providing health education, prevention, and accessing care among populations that might otherwise face barriers to these services due to cultural, linguistic, economic, or geographic reasons. Because they share the same language, culture, ethnicity, status, and experiences of their communities, Promotoras can reduce the barriers to health education and services that are common for native-born and immigrant communities. The result is better health for more individuals, families, and communities.⁹⁶
- **Roundtable:** Small meetings hosted by Uplift with industry leaders across the Central Coast where participants discuss challenges to economic prosperity specific to a topic and potential opportunities for addressing those challenges. The goal of Roundtables is to gain industry perspective on a variety of topics.
- **Seed Investment:** Also referred to as “Seed Capital,” this is the initial funding used to start or grow a business. This type of financing is typically one of the earliest equity investments made in a startup to fund the initial steps of a company’s development such as product development, market research, and building a management team.⁹⁷
- **Strategy:** A high-level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty. It involves setting broad objectives and deciding on the actions and resources required to achieve these objectives.⁹⁸
- **Strategy Lab:** An interactive workshop to gather Uplift Vision and Regional Steering Committee Members’ input and feedback on preliminary strategies and obtain additional preliminary strategy ideas.
- **Struggling Workers and Families:** Residents whose income (or whose families’ income) does not enable them to afford a basic set of necessities, plus reserve some savings, according to customized analysis of regional costs of living.
- **Tactic:** Specific actions or steps to take to accomplish strategies. They are more immediate and are the means through which strategies are implemented.⁹⁹
- **Traded Sector:** The traded sector consists of industries that sell goods and services to customers outside the region. For example, technology companies develop software and hardware products used around the country and the world. Similarly, the agriculture industry produces lettuces, strawberries, and other commodities sold in many markets. Because these industries “import” new money into the region by selling to external customers, they support broader local growth.
- **Transitional Kindergarten (TK):** A universally accessible and an optional, free program for age-eligible four-year-old children (to be available at no-cost to all four-year-old children by the 2025–26 school year).
- **Uplift Central Coast Coalition (Uplift):** A group of economic development nonprofits and community representatives who will collaboratively determine how to effectively use California Jobs First grants for maximum impact for Central Coast residents, creating a comprehensive plan for how to allocate resources.

⁹⁶ Who Are Promotores?, *Visión y Compromiso*, <https://visionycompromiso.org/who-we-are/who-are-promotores/>.

⁹⁷ “Seed Capital: What It Is, How It Works”, Investopedia, August 12, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/seedcapital.asp>.

⁹⁸ Michael Boyles, “What is Business Strategy & Why is it Important?”, Harvard Business School, October 20, 2022, <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/what-is-business-strategy>.

⁹⁹ Sarah Laoyan, “Strategy vs. tactics: What’s the difference?”, Asana, January 25, 2024, <https://asana.com/resources/strategy-vs-tactics>.

Annex 2: Requirements Table

The following table provides an overview of each Regional Plan Part II requirement from the State of California, alongside the corresponding page numbers where these requirements are addressed. This annex is designed to facilitate easy verification of compliance.

REQUIREMENT	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
<p>Vision and Goals</p>	<p>Develop a vision and specific regional goals for creating a High Road economy that is sustainable, inclusive, and equitable.</p> <p>Reiterate the narrative of the Regional Plan Part 1 and describe the region’s anticipated goals and outputs for the strategy development process. Additionally, describe the region’s ongoing and long-term strategy for incorporating community engagement and feedback throughout the strategy development process. Considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored engagement strategies • Feedback mechanism • Transparent and accessible decision-making processes 	<p>11</p>
<p>Regional Snapshot and SWOT</p>	<p>Include a condensed version of the analyses from Regional Plan Part 1 that provides an overview of the region and a summary of the SWOT analysis.</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>Target Sector Strategies</p>	<p>Define Sector and Justify Prioritization by Region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Development: This section should provide a snapshot of current trends and projected growth for the Target Sector. It should consider, but is not bound by, existing relevant plans such as CEDS (if applicable and appropriate) along with the following elements that work together to support creation of quality jobs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clear Local Market Signals: Assess how proposed sector and affiliated investments align with market trends and local/state/federal policies. b. Value Chain and Infrastructure: Explain how investments support the growth and clustering of businesses in the value chain of the proposed sector. Identify specific infrastructure required to grow the sector. c. Innovation Ecosystem: Describe how investments connect the private sector to local innovation resources, facilitate the movement of new technologies to market, incubate early-stage businesses, etc. d. Regional Assets: Describe specific resources within the region—local services, expertise, natural resources, community spaces and networks, etc.—that will be leveraged to strengthen the development of the target sector. • Increasing Economic Diversification and Resilience: Describe the growth, diversification, and/or resilience potential of the target sector. 	<p>38</p>

REQUIREMENT	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
	<p>Alignment with Job Quality & Access, Equity, and Climate: 51–54 and 59–60</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Quality & Access: Explain how the Target Sector Strategy will prioritize family-sustaining jobs with healthcare and retirement benefits, career advancement opportunities, access to training, consistent scheduling, safe working conditions, and opportunities for collective worker input and representation. <p>This could include creating new high-quality jobs, retaining existing high-quality jobs, or improving the quality of existing jobs. Quality jobs should focus on equitable access for members of disinvested communities, including—but not limited to—tailored training programs, clear pathways for attaining necessary education or skills, and inclusive recruitment practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Specifically, refer to the analyses of workforce and demographic trends and focus on closing gaps, reaching universal levels of service, and/or include outcomes disaggregated by race, ethnicity, income, etc. f. Strategy must support workers potentially impacted by at-risk industries and must prevent displacement of incumbent workers or replacement of high-road jobs with low-quality jobs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity: Explain how the Target Sector Strategy will provide indirect and/or direct community benefits, particularly to disinvested communities. Describe how the needs and interests of disinvested communities impacted the selection of the Target Sector Strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Analysis and recommendations must highlight how this strategy will serve historically marginalized and disinvested groups and how those groups will be engaged and learn about proposed interventions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate: Explain how the Target Sector Strategy will limit the impacts of economic development activities on the natural environment. The strategy must also avoid exacerbating the effects of climate change and include pathways for mitigating the effects of anticipated climate impacts on targeted industries and occupations. It must also address public health needs, with special attention to the needs of disinvested communities. <hr/> <p>Workforce Development: Explain how the strategy plans to match skills to available jobs, address talent and recruitment, and facilitate strategic collaboration among businesses, training and education institutions, labor, etc.</p> <hr/> <p>Alignment with State Strategies: An assessment of how the Target Sector Strategy can align with, support, and be supported by existing state strategies in areas like clean energy, air pollution reduction, transportation decarbonization, climate adaptation, sustainable water management, and natural and working lands. Examples of State Strategies include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Climate Adaptation Strategy • California Climate Scoping Plan • Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) • California’s 30x30 Initiative 	

REQUIREMENT	DESCRIPTION	PAGE
	<p>Strategy Implementation (recommended): Describe the necessary partnerships and resources required for sector development. Explain the Collaborative’s and/or other partners’ roles in the management and governance of the strategy. If possible, include an anticipated budget and/or possible funding sources, a high-level work plan with example tasks and assignments, and a mitigation plan for any potential risks associated with the strategy. Sector investment coordinators will continue this work during the Catalyst Predevelopment Phase.</p>	
<p>Sector-Neutral and Economic Mobility Strategies</p>	<p>Identify Problem and Opportunity: Define the strategy and demonstrate the need in the region. Incorporate findings from the Regional Plan Part 1 analyses, including information from the stakeholder mapping exercise, regional summary, labor market analysis, industry cluster analysis, and/or the SWOT analysis.</p> <p>Regional Assets: Describe specific resources within the region—local services, expertise, natural resources, community spaces and networks, etc.—that will be leveraged to strengthen the development of the strategy.</p>	<p>69</p>
	<p>Increasing Economic Diversification and Resilience: Describe the growth, diversification, and/or resilience potential of the strategy.</p>	
	<p>Alignment with Job Quality & Access, Equity, and Climate <i>(See details in Target Sector Strategies section)</i></p>	
	<p>Workforce Development <i>(See details in Target Sector Strategies section)</i></p>	
	<p>Alignment with State Strategies <i>(See details in Target Sector Strategies section)</i></p>	
	<p>Strategy Implementation <i>(recommended)</i> <i>(See details in Target Sector Strategies section)</i></p>	
<p>Additional Regional and Community Development Strategies</p>	<p>Include description of strategies that are critical to building resilient regions and communities but are outside the scope of the Regional Investment Initiative.</p>	<p>91</p>
<p>A Path Forward: Institutionalizing Community-Led, Climate Forward Planning</p>	<p>Describe how the region plans to maintain the partnerships of the Collaborative and the governance structure beyond California Jobs First. Identify different resources needed to sustain the Collaborative and discuss the Collaborative’s vision for developing engagement opportunities for communities and stakeholders during and beyond the Catalyst Predevelopment and Implementation Phases, including project-specific engagement considerations.</p>	<p>109</p>
<p>The Theory of Change</p>	<p>The theory of change was included and well-explored. The problem clearly identified and addressed logically.</p>	<p>151</p>

Annex 3: State Strategies and Initiatives Reviewed

The below list includes some of the State of California strategies and initiatives that Uplift reviewed to align its strategies for the Central Coast region. Please note that an asterisk* indicates a strategy that was explicitly listed in the State-provided outline.

1. California Climate Adaptation Strategy*
2. California Climate Scoping Plan*
3. Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)*
4. California's 30x30 Initiative*
5. California's 2020–2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan
6. The California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050
7. The 2023 State Climate Resilience Improvement Plan for Transportation
8. Executive Order B–55–18 to Achieve Carbon Neutrality (Carbon Neutrality by 2024)
9. Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development priorities, as represented on the agency's website. (GO-Biz is in the process of developing a statewide economic development plan)
10. Proposition 28: The Arts and Music in Schools (AMS) Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act
11. Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383)
12. Assembly Bill AB 525 Offshore Wind Strategic Plan
13. Home Energy Rebate Program
14. Weatherization Assistance Program
15. Made in California Initiative
16. Solar for All (Federal Initiative)
17. CHIPS and Science Act (Federal Initiative)
18. Inflation Reduction Act (Federal Initiative)
19. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Federal Initiative)
20. Department of Energy's Training for Residential Energy Contractors (TREC) Program (Federal Initiative)
21. State of California Department of Education Expanded Learning Division (EXLD) Strategic Plan 2.0
22. State of California Department of Education Quality Schooling Framework

Annex 4: Community Engagement Summary

Uplift worked with communities across the Central Coast to co-create and co-develop this report, a sustainable and equitable economic development plan that is for the people, by the people. This plan is meant to reflect community members' aspirations for themselves and future generations, leveraging their unique strengths, and enable inclusive economic growth across the Central Coast. Many of the challenges and ideas for improvement brought up by community members focused on areas that are outside of the scope of California Jobs First. These contributions, while outside of scope, are critical for the vitality of the region. **Without improvements in areas such as affordable housing and child care access, job creation and improvements in sectors such as manufacturing and advanced businesses services, efforts will not yield diverse workforce expansion necessary for market growth nor improve the essential infrastructure needed to holistically serve the region's residents.**

To reach a wider variety of individuals than who is typically included in economic development planning processes, Uplift contracted with 17 CBOs, as shown in Figure 15, to host Listening Sessions. The selected CBOs primarily serve individuals experiencing homelessness, disadvantaged youth, low-income residents, immigrants, farmworkers, labor unions, Hispanic or Latino/x/e communities, federally unrecognized Nations/Tribes, people with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and other non-heterosexual sexual orientations) community, Black or African American communities, and women.

UPLIFT'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (IN 2023 AND 2024)

98 Listening Sessions Held

3,373 Listening Session Participants

533 Community Update Meeting Participants

Listening Sessions are mid-sized stakeholder-specific sessions tailored to hear from a specific community, prioritizing disinvested communities and those who have been historically left out of economic development planning processes. During Listening Sessions, hosts facilitated discussions that invited participants to share the challenges they encounter and propose potential solutions. This approach fostered open dialogue, partnerships, and the co-creation of solutions for overcoming the barriers faced by communities across the Central Coast.

While Uplift received a considerable amount of positive feedback from CBOs on their experience in hosting Listening Sessions, there were some challenges and tensions that arose. Listening Session participants who qualified for the Inclusivity Fund¹⁰⁰ were eligible to receive a \$100 gift card to compensate them for their time and alleviate some of the financial burdens of participating in community engagements. Due to the state's requirements for tracking the Inclusivity Fund, the large size of the region, and the location of each Listening Session, Uplift utilized electronic gift cards. Some CBOs

¹⁰⁰ The Inclusivity Fund aims to alleviate the financial constraints associated with participating in community engagements, it provides a stipend of \$100 a day, to resource participation for those eligible. Individuals self-certified that they meet the criteria for disinvested communities as defined by California Jobs First or belong to at least one following population categories: Low-income, Non-English speaking, Non-US Citizens, People of color, LGBTQIA, Youth or Elderly, People with disabilities, People experiencing homelessness, Outdoor workers, Indigenous People, Native Americans, and Tribal Nations or any intersection of the above. For more details please see page 23 of the *Regional Plan Part I*.

expressed that individuals struggled with the technology associated with these electronic gift cards and were only able to use them for online purchases. Although there were challenges and criticisms regarding the use of gift cards, the overall experience was successful. The focus remains on the importance of conducting meaningful discussions with community members and appropriately compensating them for their time and willingness to participate in conversations about the region’s future. For some participants, the ability to voice out their challenges in the community enabled them to feel seen

and supported. Some people shared the healing aspect of naming those pieces and were interested in being part of the solutions to the major economic obstacles shared.

As of May 17, 2024, CBOs hosted 56 Listening Sessions, with over 1,500 community members in attendance. To complement the 38 Listening Sessions and Community Convenings that Uplift held in 2023, Uplift hosted four Listening Sessions and two community update meetings between January 1, 2024, to May 17, 2024.

Figure 15: Community Based Organizations (CBOs) selected for the Community Engagement Services Contracts

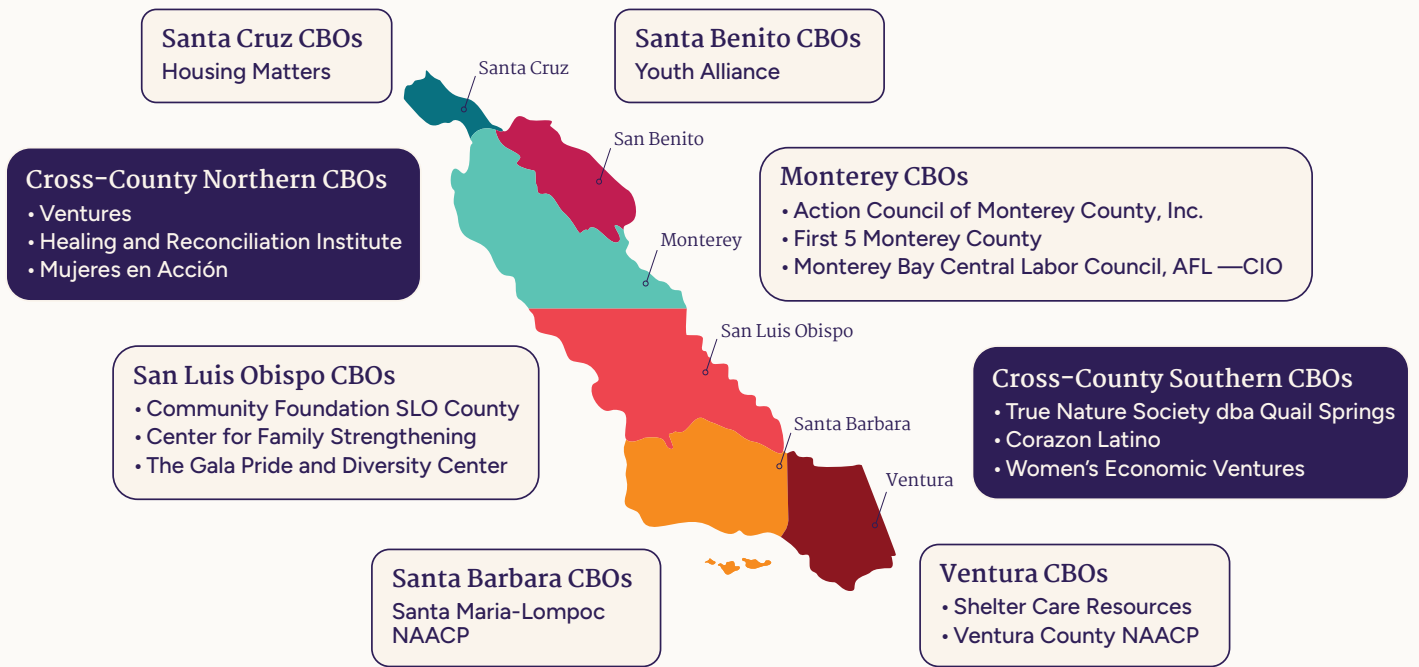


Figure 15: Geographic overview of the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) selected for the Community Engagement Services Contracts.

“It’s hard to take the next step to save money. You’re supposed to spend one-third of your money on rent, but here you have to spend 90 percent.”

Listening Session hosted by Housing Matters in Santa Cruz County

Themes from CBO-Hosted Listening Sessions:

During Listening Sessions, participants were typically asked about the challenges they experience living on the Central Coast, their vision and aspirations for their community, and strategies they would implement to solve the issues their community faces. These questions solicited a wide range of responses covering many different topics. The following themes were expressed consistently during Listening Sessions held across the Central Coast region.

High Cost of Housing: *The high cost of housing and lack of affordable housing was brought up as a top challenge in every Listening Session.* Communities across the Central Coast face high rent and an inaccessible housing market leaving them spending too much of their already low paychecks on housing. On top of high rental costs, many participants expressed additional barriers such as high application fees and security deposits. Listening Session participants expressed a desire for rent stabilization policies, more affordable housing built in the region, home buying assistance, and housing for farmworkers and immigrants who might not have Social Security Numbers or documentation.

Insufficient Quality Jobs: The prevalence of low-wage jobs and lack of quality jobs in the region was an issue echoed across many Listening Sessions. Community members expressed that the lack of quality jobs and high cost of living creates immense hardships. Disinvested communities and undocumented individuals face even

“It’s too hard to get childcare. You are basically working for the childcare.”

Listening Session hosted by Shelter Care Resources in Ventura County

more challenges when obtaining a quality job. Listening Session participants across the region expressed the need for more quality jobs on the Central Coast so that they can support their families and thrive.

Limited Child Care Access: The scarcity of affordable and accessible child care presents a serious obstacle, leading to hardships for individuals and often preventing many people, particularly women, from sustaining employment. Listening Session participants brought up potential solution ideas such as investing in more child care centers, investing in child care providers with flexible hours specific to farmworkers, removing barriers for undocumented immigrants to access training for providing child care at a community or neighborhood level, and mandating employees to have either onsite child care or to provide child care stipends for employees.

“We need to bring in more opportunities for different kinds of jobs. They have a new facility for carpentry but there are so many other apprenticeship programs like plumbing, electricity, robotics. We need more industries brought into the community and these would be a starting place especially for young people.”

Listening Session hosted by Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP virtually

Limited Healthcare Access: The lack of access to healthcare, especially mental health services, is a challenge faced across the Central Coast. Listening Session participants expressed a desire for more clinics and healthcare centers, health insurance coverage to be expanded, access to language interpreters at medical centers, and expanded mental health services in their communities.

“Doctors and specialists are not available. It takes too long to get an appointment. People have to take the day off to go out of town to have assessment sonograms and X-rays and other special treatments.”

Listening Session hosted by Youth Alliance
in San Benito County

Discrimination: Many participants recounted events of being discriminated against and explained that even with all the necessary qualifications, candidates who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are often not given roles because of racism and colorism. Community members expressed the need to have greater diversity represented in higher education institutions, nonprofits, and their places of employment. Uplift recognizes that people do not have monolithic identities, and often, the challenges faced by individuals are exacerbated by the intersectionality of various forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, religious discrimination, and ableism.

“Racism. I encounter it on a daily basis. In business, church, shopping, driving, serving on a jury, elections, at the polls, at the movies, at baseball games. You name the place or situation, I have experienced and documented it. [...] Racism stops growth, increases poverty. [...] I have lived in diverse communities, had businesses, and worked for major corporations. What I have experienced on the central coast is racial discrimination [...].”

Listening Session hosted by Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP virtually

Insufficient Transportation: Participants in several Listening Sessions highlighted the issue of unreliable transportation. The Central Coast, especially in rural areas, suffers from limited or non-existent public transportation options. This deficiency creates additional barriers for community members trying to access job opportunities. Moreover, the strain of long, traffic-heavy commutes coupled with the high cost of gas adds to the financial, mental health, and child care challenges faced by many individuals. Participants in the Listening Sessions voiced the need to expand public transportation and increase resources for low-income individuals—such as offering reduced fares on public transit or providing stipends for alternate transportation methods like rideshare credits. They also suggested investing in safer, more pedestrian-friendly streets to increase walkability.

Outdated and Under Resourced Education and Training Opportunities: Participants underscored the need for reform within the education sector, with a focus on disinvested communities. They insisted on needing more inclusive learning environments and an increase in resources for low-income families and students with disabilities. Participants described the lack of support that many children receive at school, especially children with disabilities. In addition to students, teachers face a lack of support. Due to the high cost of living, especially the high cost of housing, teachers cannot afford to live in many parts of the Central Coast. During a Listening Session hosted virtually by Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP, a participant shared that “we have a teacher that lives across the road, but the landlord just doubled the rent, so she has to move.” Listening Session participants suggested several ways to combat the issues surrounding the education system. The desire for early exposure to college opportunities and pathways to trade schools was expressed, alongside the establishment of more vocational education and training centers. Some participants proposed the creation of a job training hub to place students in local industries such as healthcare or aerospace.

“I invested four and a half years in education but came out feeling like it wasn’t worth it because I graduated but didn’t have experience for a career. It was difficult to apply for jobs.”

**Listening Session hosted by Action Council
in Monterey County**

“If money were no object, I’d focus on making public transportation more accessible and efficient. I’d invest in expanding public transit options, including light rail, buses, and other modes of transportation. I’d also focus on making public transit more affordable, so that it’s accessible to everyone. In addition, I’d work on making the region more walkable and bikeable, by investing in infrastructure like sidewalks and bike lanes. I think that making it easier for people to get around without relying on cars would be a huge benefit to the community.”

Listening Session hosted by Community Foundation San Luis Obispo virtually

“We are rich in culture,
not in funds.”

Listening Session hosted by Healing and Reconciliation virtually

Indigenous Communities’ Needs: Members from Indigenous communities expressed the need for proper capacity and infrastructure to protect ancestral land, and their cultural and natural resources, including increasing educational opportunities and collaboration with Local and State agencies and conservation organizations. Listening Session participants suggested the creation of a cultural plaza dedicated to seasonal events, restoration, rehabilitation, and repatriation including provisions for affordable housing and legal services for the community.¹⁰¹

Language Barriers: Individuals who do not speak English face many barriers, such as discrimination, misunderstandings while obtaining medical care, and challenges in obtaining quality jobs. Many Listening Session participants expressed the need for more interpretation services in Spanish and Mixteco in places like schools and healthcare centers. Participants wanted opportunities to learn English, as well as more opportunities for English speakers to learn Spanish. They suggested programs such as dual language immersion programs in schools, job trainings given in English, Spanish, and Mixteco, and the creation of community centers to provide interpretation services.

“Deberían educar a los doctores culturalmente para entender los desafíos de la comunidad.”

English Translation: “They should educate doctors on cultures so they’re able to understand the challenges the community faces.”

Listening Session hosted by Action Council in Monterey County

Strong Sense of Community: Listening Session participants share a strong sense of community and expressed that this was a major positive attribute of living on the Central Coast. Listening Session participants expressed their desire for additional third spaces (places to spend time outside of home/school and work) and suggested creating community centers. These community centers could include resources for small business owners, mental health services, language support, or financial literacy programs.

Immigration: Community members highlighted the many barriers immigrants, specifically undocumented individuals, face. People who are undocumented face obstacles to obtaining quality jobs and in many instances are taken advantage of by their employers. Participants would like to see pathways to citizenship and greater protections for immigrants.

Digital Divide, Food Access, Public Safety, and Financial Literacy: Themes such as the lack of equitable access to digital infrastructure, the lack of access to food, concerns about public safety, and the desire for more financial literacy programs arose across some Listening Sessions in specific communities, rather than as regional themes.

¹⁰¹ The CBO host for Listening Sessions focused on the Indigenous Community did not share direct quotes with Uplift per the request of their participants.

“There’s a lot of expertise in this town. There’s a guy who lives here who was an engineer at Boeing. There’s a science guy who knows about geography and geology. [Name redacted] knows a lot about history and Indigenous culture. Victory garden people know Botany. This expertise needs to be connected.”

Listening Session hosted by Quail Springs in Santa Barbara County

Next Steps for Uplift’s Community Engagement:

Uplift’s community engagement efforts have highlighted a wide range of challenges faced by residents of the Central Coast and have also generated a variety of potential solutions. Some of these solutions fall within the scope of California Jobs First or may be suitable for the Catalyst Predevelopment Phase. However, other strategies and solutions proposed by the community could potentially align with other investment opportunities such as State, Federal, or philanthropic funding sources. Uplift can leverage these community-centered strategies beyond California Jobs First to help create a more equitable, sustainable, and thriving Central Coast. As one community member stated, “when we thrive, everyone thrives.”¹⁰²

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DETAILS

The table below includes Listening Sessions, Community Convenings, and Community Update Meetings hosted by CBOs and Uplift from January 1, 2024, through June 15, 2024.¹⁰³

TYPE	HOST	DATE	COUNTY	LANGUAGE	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Listening Session	Action Council	3/26/2024	Monterey	Spanish	Farm workers; Low-income individuals	17
Listening Session	Action Council	4/5/2024	Monterey	English	Salinas Youth	27
Listening Session	Action Council	4/10/2024	Monterey	English	Low-income families	40
Listening Session	Action Council	4/11/2024	Monterey	English	The Black or African American Community	36
Listening Session	Center for Family Strengthening	2/7/2024	San Luis Obispo	English and Spanish	Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	29
Listening Session	Center for Family Strengthening	2/20/2024	San Luis Obispo	Spanish and Mixteco	Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Low-income individuals; Undocumented individuals	17
Listening Session	Center for Family Strengthening	2/22/2024	San Luis Obispo	English and Spanish	Youth; Low-income families; Students, Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Undocumented individuals	11

¹⁰² Quote from a Listening Session hosted by Action Council in Monterey County.

¹⁰³ For details on the community engagement efforts that Uplift completed in 2023, please see page 22 of the Introduction section and pages 198 and 199 of the Annex in Uplift’s *Regional Plan Part I*.

UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST

TYPE	HOST	DATE	COUNTY	LANGUAGE	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Listening Session	Center for Family Strengthening	3/1/2024	San Luis Obispo	Spanish	Low-income individuals; Agriculture or outdoor workers; Single parents, Youth, and LGBTQ+ individuals	50
Listening Session	Community Foundation SLO	2/28/2024	San Luis Obispo (Virtual)	English	People with disabilities	46
Listening Session	Community Foundation SLO	3/3/2024	San Luis Obispo (Virtual)	English	People with disabilities	84
Listening Session	Corazon Latino	3/3/2024	San Luis Obispo	Spanish	Low-income individuals; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	64
Listening Session	Corazon Latino	3/14/2024	Santa Barbara	Spanish	Low-income individuals; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	35
Listening Session	Corazon Latino	4/16/2024	Santa Barbara	Spanish	Low-income individuals; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	41
Listening Session	First 5	3/6/2024	Monterey	Spanish and English	Greenfield Union School District (GUSD) parents and families with young children	27
Listening Session	First 5	3/12/2024	Monterey	Spanish and English	Salinas parents and families with young children	35
Listening Session	First 5	4/22/2024	Monterey	English	Black or African American Individuals, Parents and Family of young children	30
Listening Session	First 5	5/6/2024	Monterey	Mixteco	Pájaro residents; Parents and families with young children	25
Listening Session	Gala Pride	5/8/2024	San Luis Obispo	English	LGBTQ+ individuals	42
Listening Session	Gala Pride	5/15/2024	San Luis Obispo	English	LGBTQ+ individuals	6

Regional Plan Part II Report

TYPE	HOST	DATE	COUNTY	LANGUAGE	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Listening Session	Healing and Reconciliation	2/7/2024	San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey (Virtual)	English	Indigenous Nations	6
Listening Session	Healing and Reconciliation	2/28/2024	San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey (Virtual)	English	Indigenous Nations	8
Listening Session	Healing and Reconciliation	3/6/2024	San Benito, Santa Cruz, and Monterey (Virtual)	English	Indigenous Nations	10
Listening Session	Housing Matters	1/29/2024	Santa Cruz	English	People experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County	24
Listening Session	Housing Matters	3/18/2024	Santa Cruz	English	People experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County	31
Listening Session	Monterey Bay Central Labor Council	2/29/2024	Santa Cruz	English and Spanish	Students and faculty	15
Listening Session	Monterey Bay Central Labor Council	4/11/2024	Santa Cruz	Spanish	Students and faculty	16
Listening Session	Monterey Bay Central Labor Council	4/29/2024	Santa Cruz, Monterey	English	Union members	10
Listening Session	Mujeres en Acción	1/25/2024	Monterey	Spanish	Farm workers	67
Listening Session	Mujeres en Acción	3/15/2024	Monterey, Santa Cruz	Spanish and Mixteco	Low-income individuals; Farm workers; The Indigenous community	65
Listening Session	Quail Springs	2/18/2024	Santa Barbara	English and Spanish	Cuyama residents	80
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	1/22/2024	Santa Barbara (Virtual)	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	12

UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST

TYPE	HOST	DATE	COUNTY	LANGUAGE	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	1/25/2024	Santa Barbara (Virtual)	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color youth	17
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	3/4/2024	Santa Barbara	English	Youth, Rural Families, LGBTQ	23
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	3/5/2024	Santa Barbara (Virtual)	English	NAACP Members	23
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	4/18/2024	Santa Barbara	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	21
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	4/22/2024	Santa Barbara	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	12
Listening Session	Santa Maria-Lompoc NAACP	4/25/2024	Santa Barbara	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	34
Listening Session	Shelter Care	1/23/2024	Ventura	English and Spanish	People with less than 30 percent income	23
Listening Session	Shelter Care	2/29/2024	Ventura	English and Spanish	People with less than 30 percent income	44
Listening Session	Shelter Care	3/19/2024	Ventura	English and Spanish	People with less than 30 percent income	34
Listening Session	Shelter Care	4/23/2024	Ventura	English and Spanish	People with less than 30 percent income	28
Community Update Meeting	Uplift	1/25/2024	All (Virtual)	English and Spanish	The Central Coast Community	179
Community Update Meeting	Uplift	5/17/2024	All (Virtual)	English and Spanish	The Central Coast Community	143
Listening Session	Uplift (Cal Poly Diversity Partners Network)	4/4/2024	San Luis Obispo	English	Cal Poly Diversity Partners Network	25
Listening Session	Uplift (Poder Popular)	2/29/2024	Ventura	Spanish	Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals, Immigrants, and Spanish speaking individuals	33

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TYPE	HOST	DATE	COUNTY	LANGUAGE	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Listening Session	Uplift (Poder Popular)	3/4/2024	Ventura	Spanish	Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals, Immigrants, and Spanish speaking individuals	29
Listening Session	Uplift (Santa Cruz Black)	1/18/2024	Santa Cruz	English	Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals, Immigrants, and Spanish speaking individuals	23
Listening Session	Ventura NAACP	1/19/2024	Ventura	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Asians individuals, Low-income and transitional age individuals	5
Listening Session	Ventura NAACP	1/31/2024	Ventura	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Asians individuals, Low-income and transitional age individuals	11
Listening Session	Ventura NAACP	2/10/2024	Ventura	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Asians individuals, Low-income and transitional age individuals	13
Listening Session	Ventura NAACP	3/29/2024	Ventura	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Asians individuals, Low-income and transitional age individuals	10
Listening Session	Ventura NAACP	4/30/2024	Ventura	English	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Asians individuals, Low-income and transitional age individuals	18
Listening Session	Ventures	2/1/2024	San Benito	Spanish	Working class Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	24
Listening Session	Ventures	2/29/2024	Monterey	Spanish	Working class Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	24

UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST

TYPE	HOST	DATE	COUNTY	LANGUAGE	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Listening Session	Ventures	3/28/2024	Monterey	Spanish	Working class Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals	22
Listening Session	Women's Economic Ventures (WEV)	4/3/2024	Ventura	English	Low-income individuals; Single mothers	12
Listening Session	Women's Economic Ventures (WEV)	4/8/2024	Ventura	Spanish	Farm workers; Undocumented individuals; Indigenous individuals	11
Listening Session	Women's Economic Ventures (WEV)	4/16/2024	Santa Barbara (Virtual)	English	Low-income individuals	18
Listening Session	Women's Economic Ventures (WEV)	4/19/2024	Santa Barbara	English	Unhoused women	13
Listening Session	Women's Economic Ventures (WEV)	4/23/2024	Santa Barbara; Ventura (Virtual)	Spanish	Hispanic or Latino/x/e individuals; Immigrants; Undocumented individuals	6
Listening Session	Youth Alliance	2/9/2024	San Benito	Spanish	Spanish speaking parents	37
Listening Session	Youth Alliance	3/13/2024	San Benito	English	Youth	55

Annex 5: Roundtable Summary

Uplift hosted a series of meetings called Roundtables with leaders on topics pertaining to key industries and issues impacting quality of life on the Central Coast. Roundtables are issue—and/or industry specific forums where participants discuss challenges to economic prosperity specific to a topic and potential opportunities for addressing those challenges. Roundtables helped Uplift engage directly with industry leaders. This allowed for the exchange of ideas to enhance their unique sectors, tackle prevalent challenges, and gain deeper insights into their requirements and preferred strategies. Uplift identified the topics for Roundtables by analyzing data and community input shared in the Regional Plan Part I and consulting with Vision, Steering, and Research Committee members.

Roundtables covered the following topics:

- **Industries with strong potential for bringing more quality jobs:**
 - . Precision Manufacturing and Advanced Business Services
 - . Small Business (High-Growth Entrepreneurship)
 - . Small Business (Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Entrepreneurship)
- **Large employers with focus on upgrading the quality of jobs:**
 - . Agriculture
 - . Hospitality and Tourism
 - . Healthcare
- **Issues critical for quality and vitality of life of the community:**
 - . Child Care
 - . Housing
 - . K-12 and Higher Education
 - . Food Systems
 - . Immigration
 - . Arts and Culture
 - . Nonprofit (Community Foundations and Funders)

Roundtable participants included representation from companies, such as Executive Directors, Board Members, and chairs, based on suggestions from the Uplift team and Committees. Participants for the Roundtables were recommended by members of Uplift, REACH, MBEP, and EDC, as well as by the Vision and Steering Committee. Invitations were extended to approximately 30 to 40 individuals per topic. Not all invitees were unable to attend. A full list of Roundtables and the number of participants is listed on the following pages.

UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST

TOPIC	DATE	ENTITIES REPRESENTED	PARTICIPANTS
Small Business (Main Street and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Entrepreneurship)	04/03/24	El Pájaro Community Development Corporation Slice Project SMVCC Women’s Economic Ventures Atascadero Chamber of Commerce Buellton Visitors Bureau County of Ventura Electronics Plus Guadalupe Business Association Solvang Chamber of Commerce West Ventura County Business Alliance	13
Immigration	04/03/24	Centro Binacional Para El Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO) Lideres Campesinas San Luis Obispo County UndocuSupport	4
Precision Manufacturing	04/05/24	Atlas Copco Mafi-Trench Company Eagle Medical Joby Aviation Launchpoint Electric Propulsion Solution San Benito County Business Council, Inc. Transphorm	7
K-12 and Higher Education	04/05/24	Building Healthy Communities Monterey County California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) Cuesta College Gavilan Joint Community College San Luis Obispo College of Law Santa Barbara City College Santa Barbara County Education Office University of California Santa Barbara Western Governors University Youth Alliance	10
Small Business (High-Growth Entrepreneurship)	04/08/24	Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship— Small Business Development (CIE SBDC) California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) Santa Cruz Works CenterLatino Generations Fund HawkTower Matter Labs	8

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TOPIC	DATE	ENTITIES REPRESENTED	PARTICIPANTS
Nonprofit (Community Foundations and Funders)	04/09/24	California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits) Community Foundation for Monterey County Digital NEST Monterey Peninsula Foundation Salinas Regional Sports Authority San Benito County Business Council, Inc. Santa Clara and San Benito Counties Building and Construction Trades Council The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County Ventura County Community Foundation	10
Workforce Housing	04/10/24	Habitat for Humanity SLO Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo KOBLE Collab League Of Women Voters Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) People's Self-Help Housing (PHSS) REACH Workbench and New Way Homes	8
Child Care	04/11/24	Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, Inc. Eileen Monahan Consulting First 5 Monterey County First 5 Santa Cruz County First 5 SLO Isla Vista Youth Projects, Inc. DbA LEAP JCEO of Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc. San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce Ventura County Office of Education	9
Healthcare	04/16/24	Community Health Centers of The Central Coast Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital Health Career Connection Marian Regional Medical Center/Arroyo Grande Community Hospital San Benito High School San Luis Obispo County Public Health The Permanente Medical Group, Inc.	7

UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST

TOPIC	DATE	ENTITIES REPRESENTED	PARTICIPANTS
Food Systems	04/16/24	Abound Food Care Blosser Urban Garden/EconAlliance Central Coast Resilient Food Systems and California Food Policy Council Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) Edgar & Associates Esperanza Community Farms Farm Discovery at Live Earth Honeyglue Solutions Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust Monterey County Food Systems Coalition Santa Barbara County Food Action Network Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County SLO Food Bank Sustainable Systems Research Foundation	15
Agriculture	04/17/24	Driscoll's of Central Coast D'Arrigo Bros. Company of California HR Force JB Dewar Inc. McGrath Family Farm Rodale Institute Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council Western Growers Innovation Center	8
Arts and Culture	04/18/24	Arts Council for Monterey County Arts Council Santa Cruz County Blue Sky Sustainable Living Center California For the Arts Center Stage Theater and California for the Arts City of Simi Valley (County of Ventura) Economic Development Collaborative Faldas Y Flores: Folklore Mexicano Performing Arts Center San Luis Obispo San Benito County Arts Council San Luis Obispo County Arts Council San Luis Obispo Museum of Art Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture The Environment Makers/Newgrit The San Benito County Arts Council	17
Hospitality and Tourism	04/23/24	See Monterey Ventura County Lodging Association Visit Camarillo	3

Annex 6: Uplift Public Opinion Poll Summary

To bolster quantitative research and qualitative community engagement efforts Uplift conducted a public opinion poll reaching 1,200 adult Central Coast residents. Uplift engaged SJR Opinion Research to co-design and implement the public opinion poll. SJR Opinion Research is a Latino-owned polling and research company based in Sacramento that has measured public opinion throughout the United States and the world. The company conducts strategic research for leading companies, organizations, nonprofits, political candidates, and ballot initiatives, and has conducted several opinion research studies on the Central Coast. The poll occurred in October 2023. A sample size of 1,200 yields a sampling error of +/- 2.8 percent, adequate for the purposes of measuring variables relevant to economic development. This survey used mixed research methods of calling cell phones and landlines as well as contacting residents online to learn about their perceptions of economic development in the region.

Survey results revealed deep, widespread financial stress throughout all six counties. While economic factors may drive residents away from the region, respondents across ethnicities and genders reported feeling welcomed locally and feeling a sense of belonging and community in their respective counties and in the region. To increase the feasibility of staying in the region, Central Coast residents’ responses indicated a desire for the following three economic assets:

1. **Worker Education:** Prioritizing industries and employers that are willing to invest in worker education and training.
2. **Worker Benefits:** Prioritizing employers that provide exceptional benefits, including sick leave, child care, comprehensive healthcare, and support for caregivers.
3. **Affordable Housing:** Developing more housing that is affordable for typical residents.

Survey results closely align with stories and experiences from Community Listening Session participants and issue focused Roundtables, further demonstrating the prevalence of challenges such as those pertaining to the high cost of living, limited attainable housing, underdeveloped infrastructure, and language barriers.

Who Responded to this Survey?



Employment: 45% full-time, 9% part-time, 11% self-employed, 35% other



Primary Income: 73.5% one job, 26% multiple jobs, 0.5% unemployed



Resident Type: 44.7% owner, 44% renter, 11.3% neither



Education: 20.5% high school, 32.9% some college, 32.7% college grad, 13.8% post grad



Racial/Ethnic Group: 3.4% Black, 35.4% Latino, 48.8% white, 4.6% Asian, 3.3% multi-racial, 4.5% other ethnicity



County: 11.6% Santa Cruz, 2.9% San Benito, 19.2% Monterey, 12.1% San Luis Obispo, 18.8% Santa Barbara, 27.8% Ventura, 35.5% other

Additional key findings relate to the experience of living on the Central Coast and industry focus areas:

Central Coast Living

- As shown in Figure 16 over half of respondents do not see a future for themselves in the Central Coast, despite the region’s strong community, natural beauty, and world-class industries (32 percent chose “very likely” and 22 percent chose “somewhat likely” to move away from the Central Coast region over the next few years). Unable to access jobs that enable self-sufficiency and beset by unsustainable costs of living (largely attributable to housing), simply too many residents struggle.
- Over two thirds of respondents believe that the standard of living for most middle-class and working families in their county is getting worse (67.2 percent).
- Slightly more than one-third (35 percent) of respondents said they would not be able to meet even a \$500 unforeseen expense. This measure of economic insecurity proved most troubling for the unemployed (54 percent), divorced (49 percent), part-time workers (48 percent), African American residents (46 percent) and renters (45 percent). The most resilient demographic groups were those with postgraduate degrees (16 percent), homeowners (20 percent), the self-employed (22 percent), and males (25 percent).
- 65 percent of respondents indicated that there is more to be done when it comes to address racial inequities and disparities in the community such as in health, education, and incarceration.

Figure 16: How Likely Residents are to Move Away from the Central Coast Over the Next Few Years

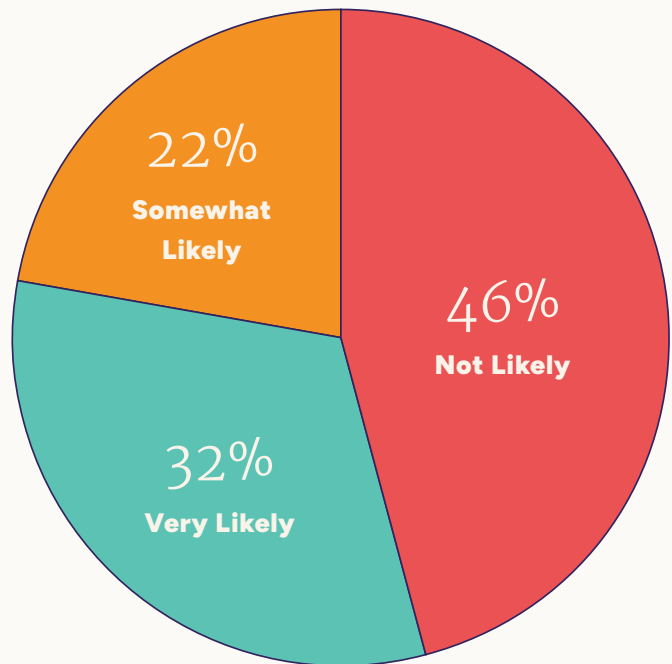


Figure 16: Percentage of residents who are very likely, somewhat likely, or not likely to move away from the Central Coast over the next few years based on polling results conducted by SJR Opinion Research.

Industry Focus Areas

- As visualized in Figure 17 nearly 70 percent of respondents do not feel that there are enough good, well-paying jobs in their community (68.4 percent).
- Nearly 70 percent of respondents think that it is very important to prioritize industries and employers that are willing to invest in worker education and training, with 68.9 percent indicating that as “very important,” 26.3 percent indicating that as “somewhat important,” and only 4.8 percent indicating that as “not important.”
- Over 75 percent of respondents think that it is very important to prioritize employers that provide exceptional benefits, including sick leave, child care, comprehensive healthcare, and support for caregivers, with 75.5 percent indicating that as “very important,” 19.2 percent indicating that as somewhat important, and only 5.1 percent indicating that as “not important.”
- Entrepreneurship and small business development is an important topic for economic strategy to prioritize, with over 90 percent of respondents acknowledging it as such (56.1 percent chose “very important,” and 35.2 percent chose “somewhat important”).
- These findings point to the need for a more innovative economic development strategy for the Central Coast. There is a strong desire for more quality jobs that offer compelling benefits and livable compensation, paired with more equity-focused action to address racial disparities. Respondents also make clear the need to mitigate challenges associated with high costs of living, which are currently limiting residents’ ability to see a future for themselves in the region. Insights from this public opinion poll, along with additional community and industry input and research, have informed the strategies that Uplift has included in this report.

Figure 17: Visualization of Respondents Industry Views

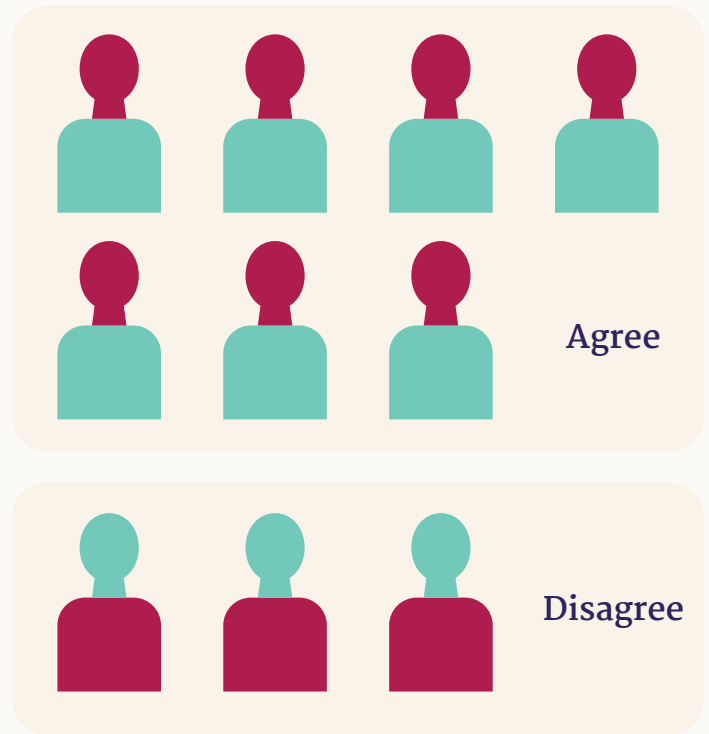


Figure 17: About 7 out of 10 respondents agreed that there are not enough good, well-paying jobs in their community. 7 out of 10 respondents also agreed that it is very important to prioritize industries and employers that are willing to invest in worker education and training.

Annex 7: Uplift Vision and Steering Committee Members

Vision Committee Members

The Vision Committee is composed of 10 members with representation across all 12 California Jobs First constituencies (as of August 2024).



Ana Rosa Rizo-Centino
COMMUNITY MEMBER

Serving the Counties of San Luis Obispo County, Santa Barbara County, Ventura County

Representing Grassroots and Community Based Organizations; Environmental Justice Organizations; Disinvested Communities



Andrea Carlos Willy
PAJARO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (PVUSD)

Serving the Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz

Representing Education and Training Providers, Grassroots and Community Based Organizations, and Disinvested Communities



Cesar Lara
CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS

Serving the Counties of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito

Representing Labor Organizations; Grassroots and Community Based Organizations



Christine Robertson
SAN LUIS COASTAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Serving the County of San Luis Obispo

Representing Education and Training Providers



Dirrick Williams
BLACK LEADERS AND ALLIES COLLABORATIVE (BLAAC)

Serving the County of Monterey

Representing Grassroots and Community Based Organizations; Environmental Justice Organizations; Disinvested Communities; Worker Centers



Garrett Wong
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Serving the Counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura

Representing Environmental Justice Organizations; Disinvested Communities; Government Agencies



Kathy Odell
RETIRED; CEO EMERITA, WOMEN'S ECONOMIC VENTURES (WEV)

Serving the Counties of Santa Barbara, Ventura

Representing Economic Development Agencies; Employers, Businesses, and Business Associations; Grassroots and Community Based Organizations; Education and Training Providers; Disinvested Communities



Lawrence (Larry) Samuels
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ

Serving the Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz

Representing Employers, Businesses, and Business Associations; Education and Training Providers



Rosa Vivian Fernandez
SAN BENITO HEALTH FOUNDATION (SBHF)

Serving the County of San Benito

Representing Employers, Businesses, and Business Associations; Disinvested Communities; Grassroots and Community Based Organizations



Sam Cohen
SANTA YNEZ BAND OF CHUMASH INDIANS

Serving the County of Santa Barbara

Representing California Native American Tribes

Northern Sub-Regional Steering Committee Members

The Northern Steering Committee is composed of 12 members with representation across all 12 California Jobs First constituencies (as of August 2024).



Angel Riotutar

CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE OF THE ROCKY BOY'S
RESERVATION; UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ
AMERICAN INDIAN RESOURCE CENTER DIRECTOR (AIRC)

Serving the County of Santa Cruz

Representing California Native American Tribes



Alma Cervantes

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES-MONTEREY COUNTY (BHC)

Serving the County of Monterey

Representing Workforce Entities



Diane Ortiz

YOUTH ALLIANCE

Serving the County of San Benito

Representing Worker Centers



Eloy Ortiz

REGENERACIÓN-PÁJARO VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION;
CENTER FOR FARMWORKER FAMILIES

Serving the Counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz

Representing Environmental Justice Organizations



Enrique Arreola

SAN BENITO COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
AGENCY; CALIFORNIA WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION

Serving the County of San Benito

Representing Government Agencies



Francisco Rodriguez

MONTEREY BAY CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Serving the Counties of Santa Cruz, Monterey

Representing Labor Organizations



Gabriela Lopez Chavez
CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH

Serving the Counties of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito

Representing Grassroots and Community Based Organizations



Jackie Cruz
HARTNELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE (HCC), HARTNELL COLLEGE FOUNDATION (HCF), BRIGHT FUTURES EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP, SALINAS INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (SIEDI) PARTNER

Serving the County of Monterey

Representing Education and Training Providers



Kristina Chavez Wyatt
CALIFORNIA MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY CONSULTING (CMTC, NIST MEP CENTER); SAN BENITO COUNTY BUSINESS COUNCIL; FARMHOUSE COMMUNICATIONS

Serving the County of San Benito

Representing Employers, Businesses, and Business Associations



Maria Elena Manzo
MUJERES EN ACCIÓN

Serving the County of Monterey

Representing Disinvested Communities



Michael Castro
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR MONTEREY COUNTY; SALINAS INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (SIEDI)

Serving the County of Monterey

Representing Philanthropic Organizations



Richard Vaughn
COUNTY OF MONTEREY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Serving the County of Monterey

Representing Economic Development Agencies

Southern Sub-Regional Steering Committee Members

The Southern Steering Committee is composed of 12 members with representation across all 12 California Jobs First constituencies (as of August 2024).



Cameron Gray
COMMUNITY MEMBER

Serving the Counties of Santa Barbara and Ventura

Representing Environmental Justice, Grassroots, and Community Based Organizations



Corlei Prieto
CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM: SANTA BARBARA ADULT EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE)

Serving the Counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura

Representing Education and Training Providers; Workforce Entities



Denise El Amin
COMMUNITY MEMBER

Serving the County of Santa Barbara

Representing Disinvested Communities



Jeremy Goldberg
CENTRAL COAST LABOR COUNCIL

Serving the Counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura

Representing Labor Organizations



Joyce Howerton
RETIRED; FUND FOR SANTA BARBARA

Serving the County of Santa Barbara

Representing Government Agencies, Grassroots, and Community Based Organizations



Michael Boyer

SANTA MARIA VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE; LUMINA ALLIANCE;
DIVERSITY COALITION SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY; SAN LUIS OBISPO CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

Serving the Counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara

Representing Employers, Businesses, and Business Associations



Nicki Parr

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC VENTURES (WEV)

Serving the Counties of Santa Barbara, Ventura

Representing Economic Development Agencies



Rebecca Evans

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD OF VENTURA COUNTY (WDBVC)

Serving the County of Ventura

Representing Worker Centers



Rita Casaverde

DIVERSITY COALITION SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY; SLO COUNTY
UNDOCUSUPPORT; SLO COUNTY CLIMATE JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Serving the County of San Luis Obispo

Representing Environmental Justice Organizations



Scott Lathrop

YTT NORTHERN CHUMASH NONPROFIT

Serving the County of San Luis Obispo

Representing California Native American Tribes



Vanessa Bechtel
VENTURA COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Serving the County of Ventura

Representing Philanthropic Organizations



Wendy Sims-Moten
FIRST 5 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Serving the County of Santa Barbara

Representing Education and Training Providers

Annex 8: Research Committee

Uplift convened a group of geographically representative experts with backgrounds in applied analysis of local economic, demographic, health, and environmental trends. The Research Committee, whose members are listed below, was engaged as local research partners in joint problem-solving for guidance and input, ensuring content is locally informed and validated.

CHRIS BENNER

Director, The Institute for Social Transformation and the Everett Program for Technology and Social Change and the Santa Cruz Institute for Social Transformation, The University of California Santa Cruz

Dorothy E. Everett Chair in Global Information and Social Entrepreneurship, The University of California Santa Cruz

Professor of Environmental Studies and Sociology, The University of California Santa Cruz

LISA CARLOS

Commissioner and Vice Chair, Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara

JAMSHID DAMOOEI

Professor of Economics, California Lutheran University

Director of the Economics Program, California Lutheran University

Executive Director of the Center for Economics of Social Issues (CESI), California Lutheran University

Former Senior Economist, The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

JAMIE FALL

Workforce and Economic Strategy Director, Economic Development Collaborative of Ventura County

Former Director, UpSkill America (The Aspen Institute)

LEEANNE MCNULTY

Director of Institutional Grants, Allan Hancock College

LATA MURTI

Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Massachusetts Global

JONI ROBERTS

Assistant Professor, Kinesiology and Public Health, California Polytechnic State University

Health Equity Consultant, County of San Luis Obispo

JOSH WILLIAMS

President, BW Research

Annex 9: Strategy Lab Outputs

Uplift held a six-hour Strategy Lab at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo on May 1, 2024, to gather Vision and Regional Steering Committee Members' input and feedback on preliminary strategies surfaced during the research phase (Phase 1). Critically, the lab enabled members to share additional preliminary strategy ideas to inform this report. In addition to the Uplift Team and advisory partners, 20 Uplift Vision and Steering Committee Members attended this engaging day of discussion.

A majority of the Strategy Lab was dedicated to a gallery walk, as shown in Figure 18. During this time, Committee Members walked around the room and reviewed key research findings, community engagement themes,

and preliminary strategies displayed on large posters for 13 topics, as shown in Figure 19. There was also a blank poster where Committee Members noted strategy ideas that did not necessarily pertain to one of those 13 topics or was intersectional in nature. Throughout this inclusive and collaborative process, Committee Members provided helpful reactions to preliminary strategies and offered approximately 50 new strategy ideas for Uplift's consideration, some of which were integrated given the similarities of the new strategies.

Figure 18: Strategy Lab Gallery Walk



Figure 18: Photo from the gallery walk section of the Strategy Lab depicting Committee Members reviewing topics and providing input and feedback on preliminary strategy ideas.

Figure 19: Strategy Lab Gallery Walk Posters with Committee Input

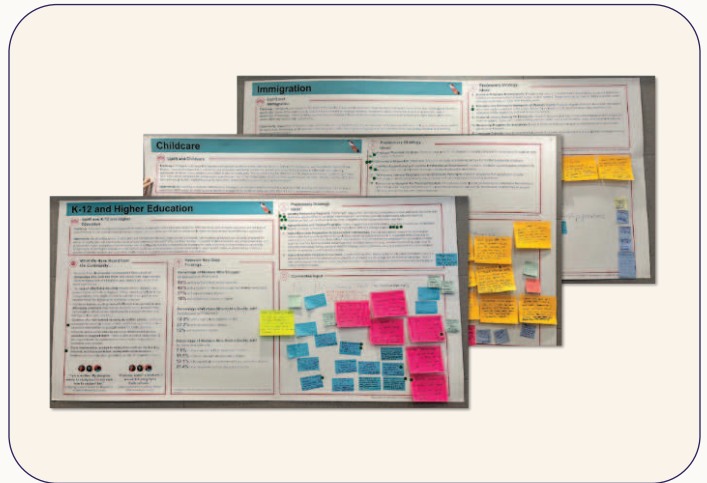


Figure 19: Photos of three of the posters presented during the Strategy Lab gallery walk. Committee Members provided input and feedback by sharing thoughts aloud, writing on sticky notes, using colored dot stickers, and taking notes for themselves.

Annex 10: Theory of Change

The theory of change visually summarizes Uplift’s understanding of the challenges faced by the Central Coast, and outlines the activities, outputs, and outcomes designed to address these challenges and deliver on the region’s vision of an equitable, sustainable economy.

Problem

45% of Central Coast residents belong to families whose income does not cover their basic needs. Additionally, the impacts of climate change present sizable challenges, disproportionately impacting disinvested communities. Economic development that promotes well-being, social cohesion, and environmental resilience needs to be prioritized.

Audience

Disinvested communities across the Central Coast, the state of California, businesses, governments, education providers, and others who can support the delivery of Uplift’s goals.

Inputs

Community engagement, industry Roundtables and interviews, and research.

Activities

Award projects that work to equitably increase quality and sustainable jobs. Advance fair and inclusive access to resources, services, education and training, and employment that enables individuals of diverse backgrounds and from disinvested communities to achieve financial well-being and upward mobility.

Award projects that improve quality of life for disinvested communities. Consider historical and systemic injustices and acknowledge that different communities require different levels of support to succeed.

Award projects that increase climate forward, quality jobs. Consider the environmental impacts to promote outcomes that effectively contribute to an equitable, climate-forward economy.

Outputs

Number of quality jobs that lift struggling families into self-sufficiency. Number of established mechanisms and programs to expand access to quality jobs for disinvested community members.

Percentage of disinvested communities benefitted (*at least 40% per the State of California*). Number of community members included in planning and engagement.

Number of quality jobs that are carbon-neutral, support sustainable industries, provide environmental services to disinvested communities, or contribute to factors that can improve the region’s CalEnviroScreen rating.

Outcomes

SHORT-TERM:

Recommend data and community-driven strategies that inform projects that make progress toward a shared vision of a sustainable, resilient, diverse, and equitable economy built by and for the region’s residents, with a focus on uplifting those from disinvested communities harmed by systematic injustices.

MEDIUM:

Improve and invest in pathways to an increased quality of life with a greater percentage of families, particularly from historically disinvested communities, who are self sufficient. Increase the availability of quality jobs that have reinvigorated residents’ sense of hope to be successful within the Central Coast.

LONG-TERM:

Create lasting change that strengthens the Central Coast’s economic competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience, where community members are equitably thriving.

Annex 11: Strategy Evaluation Criteria

Uplift systematically evaluated each strategy based on criteria that was co-developed by the Vision and Steering Committees. The following tables describe what it means for a strategy to have a high, medium, or low level of alignment or no alignment with each set of criteria.

Criteria A. Alignment with the Scope of California Job's First

ALIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION
High	<p>Strategies that are highly aligned with the scope and core objectives of California Jobs First and robustly support and/or are supported by existing state strategies.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong emphasis on equitable access to quality jobs and related resources. • Directly contributes to economic development by creating quality jobs across targeted sectors such as, but not limited to, zero-emission vehicles, carbon removal, climate resilience, renewable energy, AI, or advanced manufacturing. • Strongly aligns with, or enhances and leverages, existing state strategies, providing clear benefits in areas such as, but not limited to, clean energy, sustainable water management, and transportation decarbonization.
Medium	<p>Strategies that align moderately with the scope of California Jobs First and/or state strategies. These strategies are somewhat effective at addressing the targeted industries and goals.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some contribution to quality job creation in relevant industries such as zero-emission vehicles, carbon removal, climate resilience, renewable energy, AI, or advanced manufacturing. • Partial focus on economic development, equitable job access, and resource distribution. • Initiatives do not conflict with state strategies but may not significantly advance them.
Low	<p>Strategies that show minimal or tangential alignment with the scope of California Jobs First and other state strategies. These may include initiatives that have indirect impacts on the outlined industries or goals or address them in a superficial manner.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited connection to the creation of quality jobs in targeted sectors. • Minimal contributions to developing equitable, sustainable, and resilient economies. • Does not align with existing state strategies in areas including, but not limited to, clean energy and transportation decarbonization.
None	Strategies do not meet this criterion.

Criteria B. Alignment with Uplift’s North Star and Vision

ALIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION
<p>High</p>	<p>Strategies that strongly align with and actively promote Uplift’s North Star and Vision.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly targets and advances inclusive access to quality jobs, resources, and services. • Prominently supports the financial well-being and upward mobility of individuals from disinvested communities. • Strongly advances sustainability, potentially with an emphasis on advancing environmental justice.
<p>Medium</p>	<p>Strategies that align moderately with Uplift’s North Star and Vision, having elements that foster at least two of the core values.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses some aspects of equity, sustainability, and economic opportunity, but not comprehensively. • Initiatives somewhat contribute to the financial well-being and upward mobility of individuals from disinvested communities.
<p>Low</p>	<p>Strategies that show minimal or indirect alignment with Uplift’s North Star of combining equity, sustainability, and economic opportunity.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited focus on fostering equity or inclusivity in resource, service access, or employment. • Minimal or unclear contribution to sustainability or economic opportunities for individuals from disinvested communities.
<p>None</p>	<p>Strategies do not meet this criterion.</p>

Criteria C. Alignment with Data Findings and Community Engagement Themes

ALIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION
High	<p>Strategies that are strongly evidence-based and align closely with comprehensive data findings and community engagement themes.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly integrates and responds to regional data insights, addressing issues like job quality and industrial potential. • Focused on industry areas shown by data to be competitive in the region; concentrates quality and promising jobs, particularly for workers with less than a bachelor's degree. • Focuses on addressing gaps and barriers to economic opportunity and inclusion identified in Regional Plan Part I. • Addresses the expressed needs and aspirations of communities based on findings from Community Convenings, Listening Sessions, Roundtables, Interviews, and Public Opinion Poll.
Medium	<p>Strategies that are reflective of regional data findings and community engagement themes, where inputs might not fully align.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects key findings from the research but with some gaps in information or ability to draw definitive interpretations. • Reflects partial alignment with expressed needs and aspirations of communities.
Low	<p>Strategies that show minimal alignment with regional data findings.</p> <p>Some characteristics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little to no consideration of data on job quality, promising sectors, or regional industrial potential. • Focuses on industry areas shown by data to NOT concentrate quality and promising jobs (unless the intention is to upgrade the quality of those jobs), or areas that are not competitive. • Minimally addresses expressed needs and aspirations of communities.
None	<p>Strategies do not meet this criterion.</p>

Criteria D. Reasonably Feasible to Implement

ALIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION
<p>High</p>	<p>Strategies that are highly feasible with clear pathways for successful implementation and minimal barriers.</p> <p>Some characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable pathway for adequate and sustained resources for execution. • Implementation pathway is generally clear but may require further development. • Robust political and public support.
<p>Medium</p>	<p>Strategies are moderately feasible with some challenges that can be addressed with additional planning or resources.</p> <p>Some characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources may become available but may require reallocation or additional funding (financial, human, technological). • Some regulatory or legal considerations that are manageable with proper planning. • Some political and public support.
<p>Low</p>	<p>Strategies that face substantial challenges or have significant uncertainties regarding their implementation.</p> <p>Some characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability of resources or unclear funding sources (financial, human, technological). • Potential regulatory or legal issues that need to be resolved. • Unclear or overly complex implementation processes. • Lack of political and public consensus/significant divide of perspectives.
<p>None</p>	<p>Strategies that are deemed infeasible due to significant barriers or constraints.</p> <p>Some characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of pathway for adequate and sustained resources (financial, human, technological). • No clear implementation pathway or operational plan. • Minimal political and public support.

Annex 12: Initiatives, Ideas, and Strategies for Further Exploration

Uplift received many strategy-related ideas for consideration. To help create a regional economic development plan that is strategic, Uplift used criteria (as described at a high-level in the Strategy Development Process Overview and in detail in Annex 11: Strategy Evaluation Criteria) to determine strategies that are most likely to have a significant impact on the region's economy. Some strategy ideas did not align, partially aligned, or only loosely aligned with Uplift's criteria. This could include ideas, for instance, that did not prioritize connecting individuals from disinvested communities with quality jobs. While beyond the scope of Uplift's strategies for California Jobs First, the following ideas may be applicable for further exploration and other funding sources.

Many of these ideas, while not directly tied to immediate job creation, play a crucial role in community development, which has a significant nexus to economic development. For example, **investing in affordable housing, improving public transportation, expanding language access, and enhancing access to healthcare and education are vital for creating stable, healthy communities.** These foundational elements support economic growth by providing residents with the necessary resources and stability to participate fully in the workforce. Additionally, initiatives such as community-led development projects, small business support programs, and culturally relevant workforce training, empower Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable economic landscape. By addressing systemic barriers and fostering an environment where all community members can thrive, these strategies contribute to long-term, sustainable, and equitable economic development.

Hospitality and Tourism

- Hospitality and Tourism Transitional Employment Intermediary:** To increase the hospitality and tourism workforce and provide jobs for disinvested communities, an intermediately can be established to connect employers to transitional employment programs. As described in the Hospitality and Tourism Target Sector Strategy Section, the industry is a major piece of the Central Coast's economy. The sector drove 18.2 percent of employment growth across the Central Coast over 2012 to 2022.¹⁰⁴ However, many employers are facing significant workforce shortages. Based on survey results from Jones Lang LaSalle's (JLL) Regional Tourism Strategic Plan, local industry representatives believe that labor availability is the top threat or obstacle that if not overcome, will have a negative impact on the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry.¹⁰⁵ This program could place members of disinvested communities, as well as individuals who were formerly incarcerated, into quality and promising hospitality and tourism jobs. This would involve working with employers to ensure the jobs offered come with benefits, compensation, and pathways for advancement to increase potential of leading to quality jobs. This strategy creates a direct pathway from a low-paying job or no job into quality hospitality and tourism jobs.

¹⁰⁴ Brookings / Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates.

¹⁰⁵ Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Regional Tourism Strategic Plan, Central Coast Regional Advisory Committee.

- 2. Hospitality Employee Transportation Support:** Employees who work in the hospitality and tourism sector have working hours that sometimes stray from standard business hours. Given these irregular times, there are often fewer options for transportation late at night or early in the morning. To mitigate these issues, employers could coordinate with transit agencies to align transportation routes and schedules with the needs of local hospitality employees. This could also include introducing additional transportation services such as electric vehicle ride share, “micro transit” service to get people to transit centers or hubs, and bikeshare or e-bikeshare services.
- 3. Incentive Grants to Reimburse Permitting and Food Safety Training Fees:** To enhance entrepreneurship and increase local ownership of food establishments, incentive grants could be offered to promote the formalization and growth of home-based culinary businesses. These could include Micro Enterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs) and Cottage Food businesses. These grants could be designed to reimburse all or part of the costs associated with obtaining necessary permits and completing food safety training. By reducing the financial barriers to compliance, this supports underground restaurants and informal food vendors transition into recognized, legitimate businesses, thereby fostering a safer, more vibrant, and economically robust culinary market.
- 4. Food Truck Parks and Hubs Infrastructure:** This strategy involves creating designated areas where multiple food trucks can gather and operate. These parks not only serve as vibrant community spaces but also stimulate local economies by supporting small businesses, increasing tourism, and enhancing the urban aesthetic. Implementing this strategy requires a multi-faceted approach involving infrastructure development, regulatory adjustments, strategic partnerships, and community engagement.
- 5. Hospitality and Tourism Equitable and Sustainable Search Options:** To provide consumers with more knowledge on the choices they make while traveling, a filtering system could be incorporated. This system could highlight and rank hospitality and tourism businesses based on their sustainability initiatives and equity and inclusion efforts. By providing this information at the point of search, consumers can make more informed decisions that align with their values on environmental responsibility and social equity when visiting the Central Coast.
- 6. Support Sustainable Business Practices:** Increase awareness of programs and incentives available to assist hotels in transitioning to sustainable practices by highlighting the specific initiatives, resources, and support offered. Advocate for increased funds and incentives from the state government to support sustainability efforts in the hotel industry, promoting more extensive adoption of sustainable practices.
- 7. Make Strategic Investments in Sustainable Tourism Development:** Advocate for strategic investments in sustainable travel options and solutions, such as supporting the development of efficient public transportation infrastructure, electrification of transportation fleets, and the expansion of charging networks for electric vehicles.

Agriculture

1. **Policy Advocacy:** Work with local and state policymakers to strengthen labor laws and enforcement mechanisms, ensuring fair treatment and safety for farmworkers.

Healthcare

1. **Youth Training, and Awareness on Healthcare Career Paths:** Increase representation of elementary, middle, and high school students in health care careers by providing training, resources, and knowledge on healthcare sector careers, pathways and requirements needed to matriculate in these careers.
2. **Training in Elder and Home Health Care:** Expand training programs focusing on career paths in elder care, assisted living, and home health.
3. **Expand Medical Language and Culture Training Program:** Provide training and education in medical terminology for English-Spanish-Mixteco speakers to become certified to work in emergency room settings to provide more equitable care to patients regardless of their primary languages.
4. **Language Access Expansion:** Improve translation and interpretation services beyond just medical terminology to better serve Spanish, Mixteco, and other non-English speaking communities.
5. **Livable wage for workers:** Advocate for livable wages for workers such as social workers, community health workers among others.
6. **Diverse Healthcare Workforce Initiative:** Implement policies to hire a more diverse healthcare workforce and design targeted recruitment programs for first-generation Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) individuals.

Child Care

1. **Advocate for policies that support more robust child care options:** Advocate for policies that could increase access and affordability to child care. Such policies could include introducing government funded universal child care, increasing financial support and funding for child care providers, and extending parental leave. Additionally, advocating for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) to include middle and high school after school child care capacity could also help alleviate the strain on the child care system. ELOP provides funding for afterschool and summer school enrichment programs for transitional kindergarten through sixth grade.¹⁰⁶
2. **Improve quality of existing programs and establish new programs to provide additional quality child care:** By increasing funding to child care programs to cover additional operating hours, space, and capacity, additional access to child care can be opened to the region, as well as improvements to the quality of child care programs.

¹⁰⁶ "Expanded Learning Opportunities Program, General information regarding the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program derived from Assembly Bill (AB) 130", California Department of Education, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ex/elopinfor.asp>.

Climate and Environment

1. Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience:

- a. Conduct additional analysis of regional Superfund sites, degradation of natural resources, county and locality Climate Resilience and Adaptation Plans and Climate Action Plans, air quality and hyperlocal air quality monitoring, and cumulative burdens on disinvested communities. Include perspectives of local community members in the analysis of their local environment.
- b. Develop community climate, cooling, and disaster resilience hubs and partner with trusted messengers, such as promotoras (trained Spanish-speaking community outreach leaders) to build awareness and access to safe places during extreme climate or weather events including extended periods of extreme heat, drought, floods, wildfires, grid outages, and other significant risks to human life, property, and community prosperity.
- c. Support policies that protect vulnerable populations, like older adults and young children, as well as outdoor workers from climate and weather impacts like extreme heat. Immigrant populations bear the disproportionate burden of outdoor work and may not be able to effectively advocate for themselves without economic risks.

2. Climate Education and Outreach: Expand localized education pertaining to environmental sustainability and climate resilience, considering a model from Community Environmental Council's Climate Education and Outreach services as an example.

Housing

1. **Housing Policy Reform:** Advocating for housing policy reform is a crucial piece to solving the region's housing crisis.
 - a. **Remove Restrictive Housing Policies and Streamline Housing Approval Processes:** Advocate for removing or updating policies such as zoning laws that limit the type and density of housing to allow for higher density building and limited parking requirements. Consider updating tax policies to enable expanded housing options.
 - b. **Advocate for Streamlined Approval Processes:** To alleviate the time and financial burden that permitting often requires, advocate for streamlined approval processes associated with building. Other policy advocacy could include removing the in-lieu process. Advocate for passage of policies that increase options for local government to finance affordable housing and public infrastructure.
 - c. **Advocate for Additional Affordable Housing:** Advocate for building more affordable housing and for policies that incentivize developers to build affordable housing. Advocate for inclusionary zoning policies that require developers to build a percentage of affordable housing units per new development. Create faith community coalitions to leverage opportunities to build and advance affordable housing and resource them. Also advocate for housing programs that will increase housing attainability for the workforce across the region, including households making 60–180 percent area median income (AMI).
 - d. **Advocate for policies that reduce housing costs:** Support leadership infrastructure and capacity to organize advocacy around policies to address topics like rent control and stabilization, home insurance, down payment assistance programs, outside parties buying property for rental purposes, and just evictions and support for people losing their homes. This

may be paired with tenant rights workshops and legal aid. Coalition building to implement this strategy could involve convening a coalition of CBOs, industry partners, housing professionals, and community members to advocate for the aforementioned policy changes in conversations—private and public—with local lawmakers. Provide an advocacy training and organize meetings, transportation, food, and compensation for participation. Engage professional lobbyists to work with local lawmakers on the aforementioned policy changes. Develop a research paper that explains the desired policy changes, the process for changing them, and the expected outcomes of each change for residents and the regional economy.

- e. **Advocate for efforts that minimize displacement:** Policies may include rent control and stabilization, insurance and tenant rights information, and reducing barriers to entry (e.g., down payment assistance), and equity share programs.

2. **Non-Standard Building Methods:** Explore other ways to build housing more cost-effectively. For example, a 3D printer could be used to build concrete houses more economically, efficiently, and sustainability. There are already examples of this type of building such as the 3-D printed homes, formerly referred to as the “Solar Future Houses” created by students at Woodbury University to address the housing and climate crisis in Los Angeles.¹⁰⁷ Given the need for more housing and high costs of building, exploring different methods to build houses may enhance feasibility to build and could present opportunities for building more sustainably.

TK-12 & Higher Education

1. **Expand education workforce capacity:** Consider tactics such as establishing pathways for foreign-trained workforce currently under-employed due to credentialing, using the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) after school program to recruit staff teachers and social workers, and increasing funding to build new schools; residential fees are insufficient and there are too many bonds.
2. **Higher Education Financial Crisis Team:** Create financial crisis teams at higher education institutions to prevent students from disinvested communities from dropping out of college due to financial hardships. This is intended to support students in continuing their education journeys to close the socioeconomic and racial gap in college completion rates.
3. **Enhance Family-School Engagement Equity:** The Central Coast could benefit from enhanced resources for students and families who do not speak English. To effectively address the diverse needs of the community, enhancements to communication and accessibility could be made. Information could be delivered in multiple languages, including Spanish, local Indigenous languages, and American Sign Language, with interpretation and translation services provided as needed. Career counseling services, something typically only more wealthy families can afford, could be offered at all educational levels for students and their families. To increase family engagement with schools, options could include compensating parents for attending parent-teacher conferences, providing free child care during school events, and offering information about spaces equipped for learning and studying, complete with Wi-Fi access. These initiatives could create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that caters to the diverse needs of the community.

¹⁰⁷ Carolina A. Miranda, 2023, “L.A.’s first legal 3-D-printed house is here. It was built by students in just 15 months”, The Los Angeles Times, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2023-09-19/3d-printed-house-solar-power-students-built>

Food Access & Security

1. Redirect Unsellable Food from Farms and Food

Surplus: Minimize food waste while enhancing food security and food access for communities by establishing a system that redirects unsellable food from farms to local food banks, community kitchens, and secondary markets. Additionally, collaborate with producers, businesses, gleaners, food banks, governments, and households to reduce food waste all along the food chain and recycle organic wastes into compost that can be applied to restore soil fertility, save water, and reduce groundwater contamination. By redirecting food waste this strategy can support farmers, lead to a more sustainable Central Coast, and address the growing food insecurity magnified by the rising cost of living.

2. Expand Incentives to Increase Access to Nutritious Food and Food Sovereignty:

Create or enhance programs to increase financial incentives and viability for individuals to buy nutritious food. One way this could be accomplished is by expanding the Double Up Food Bucks program to further incentivize buying local produce. Advocate for the expansion of the Double Up Food Bucks program to be accepted in various places to buy food such as at farmers' markets. Additionally, develop support for expanding community farm and garden programs and establishing new ones.

3. Free-Market Farmers' Markets:

Advocate for a free-market framework in farmers' markets to reduce price fixing, enhance farmers' rights, and provide the community with more affordable local food options.

4. Preservation of the Food Ecosystem:

Preserve California Indigenous cultures through land and sea habitat conservation and direct investment in their business proposals. Support community land trusts and create a diversity of ways for the community to contribute and participate in the ongoing health and vitality of working lands. Expand climate-smart agriculture and organic certification. Support resource conservation districts in implementation of conservation management practices that enhance water supply, improve soil health, sequester carbon, and reduce atmospheric greenhouse gasses.

Establish a program targeted to support succession planning, new farmers, employee-owned businesses and existing farmworkers and employees in accessing land and securing equitable land tenure, with a focus on turnover of local land ownership and facilitating land ownerships to family or BIPOC and small farm businesses. Conserve fisheries and marine environments while using them in a sustainable way. Invest in marine habitat restoration and symbiotic aquaculture to produce food.

5. Economic Viability of Food Businesses:

Integrate food system business support services and invest in those in our community for whom traditional business development services are out of reach, with a focus on BIPOC, immigrants, women, and individuals with low income. Increase access to technical assistance for small farmers, especially those who lack higher education, are new and do not speak English. Support access and navigation to existing government programs (e.g., USDA, UCANR, CDFA). Pilot innovative farming and fishing economic viability models (e.g., Farm of the Future) and technology transfer from our research institutions. Develop producer collaboratives, technical assistance, and middle of the supply chain infrastructure to enable smaller producers to aggregate supply for opportunities with larger buyers such as school districts. Facilitate the development and deployment of small-scale agricultural technologies and marine robotics, such as drones and sensors, to increase productivity and employment opportunities for newly trained graduates. Expand direct sales opportunities at seafood harbor markets and farmers markets.

6. Institutional Procurement:

Leverage buying power of public institutions—hospitals, schools, correctional facilities—to retain food expenditures in the local economy. Increase local, sustainable, and equitable “farm to fork” preferential purchasing by restaurants, food service and retailers. Organize an envelope of services (e.g., insurance billing, home delivery, dietary counseling) to support small producers and MEHKOs in servicing medically supportive meals (“food as medicine”) contracts with health insurers.

- 7. Coordination and Collaboration:** Synthesize and elaborate existing and emerging local food system plans. Create and disseminate an open, bilingual mapping of farmers, community based organizations, agencies, and other entities that are part of the Central Coast's food system for regional partnership matching. Identify the synergies and opportunities gained through integrative efforts, analyze the gaps, and develop a regional food action plan to guide private and public investment in the food economy.

Transportation

- 1. Modified Zoning Laws:** Advocate for zoning laws that support transit-oriented development, encouraging higher density building near transit hubs. By increasing building near transit hubs, VMT could be reduced. This could lead to an overall reduction of commute times and have a positive impact on reducing emissions from cars.

Arts and Culture

- 1. County Arts Residency Program:** Establish partnerships between tourism organizations and art institutions to develop arts residency programs across counties, enhancing tourism and promoting the arts. Expand the program's reach by initiating exchange programs across counties, states, and countries. Additionally, consider offering artist housing to address the high cost of living on the Central Coast.
- 2. Pathways for Artists to Become Teachers:** Art education is not currently accessible to all, and it often operates on a "pay-to-play" basis, which often excludes children from disinvested communities.

According to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences there has been a persistent decline in access to art education. While 88 percent of Americans agree that arts education is an essential component of a well-rounded education, there has been a persistent decline in support for arts education, particularly in communities that cannot finance it on their own.¹⁰⁸ To address these inequities and also offer employment opportunities to artists, programs that provide artists with education and certifications that allow them to fill teaching positions, specifically in disinvested communities, can be developed or enhanced. This strategy recognizes the dual benefits of employing artists in educational roles. It can provide artists with stable employment opportunities and enhance the educational experience for students by integrating arts into the curriculum, aligning with goals of economic resilience, and equitable access to learning opportunities. Through partnerships with education institutions, local artists can receive training and eventually gain expedited teaching accreditation. These accreditation opportunities could be provided at a reduced fee or at no cost to artists, so artists can more easily access these opportunities. Once teaching credentials are obtained, the program could work with Pre-K and Transitional Kindergartens (TK), elementary, middle, and high schools across the region to place newly accredited teachers in schools with the greatest needs. This strategy can serve students who would otherwise not have been able to receive this type of valuable education. This strategy aligns with the state's workforce development, education, and training goals as outlined in California's 2020–2023 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan. It also sets up the region to align with Proposition 28.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ "Art for Life's Sake: The Case for Arts Education", American Academy of Arts & Sciences', <https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/2021-Art-for-Lifes-Sake.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ Proposition 28: The Arts and Music in Schools (AMS) Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act is legislation that allocates 1 percent of the kindergarten through grade twelve (K–12) portion of the Proposition 98 funding guarantee. Provided in the prior fiscal year, excluding funding appropriated for the AMS education program. Local educational agencies (LEAs) with 500 or more students are required to ensure that at least 80 percent of AMS funds to be expended are used to employ certificated or classified employees to provide arts education program instruction. The remaining funds must be used for training, supplies and materials, and arts educational partnership programs, with no more than 1 percent of funds received to be used for an LEA's administrative expenses. Source: California Department of Education, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/prop28artsandmusicdfunding.asp>.

Nonprofit

1. **Advocate for policy changes to better support funding needs of nonprofits:** To alleviate funding issues that many nonprofits face, advocating for policy changes may help nonprofits across the Central Coast function more efficiently and more effectively serve the community. Advocating for nonprofits to be considered a business could open additional revenue streams and allow nonprofits to apply for Small Business Administration (SBA) Loan. Nonprofits typically have difficulty getting approval for both SBA 7(a) loans and 504 loans, since those are only eligible to businesses that offer on a for-profit basis.¹¹⁰ Additionally, supporting the California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits) California Nonprofit Equity Initiative can help pass legislation that supports nonprofits across California. This initiative develops and sponsors bills that strengthen nonprofits' essential partnership with the State of California. In 2023 a package of seven bills was introduced in response to the California Nonprofit Equity Initiative. One example of a bill that passed is the "Advance Payments for All" which authorizes state agencies to provide nonprofits up to 25 percent of contracted funds up front, with a priority on nonprofits serving vulnerable communities.¹¹¹
2. **Diversify Nonprofit Revenue Streams and Expand Funding:** Work with nonprofits to expand their sources of income and attract investments to reduce dependency on a single source of funding and allow for flexibility in spending. Build expanded partnerships between nonprofits and innovative funders, such as foundations that leverage donor-advised funds and provide substantial funding for capacity building activities that are not tied to a specific outcome. This unrestricted funding can be crucial to provide sustainable outcomes. Additionally, introducing revolving loan funding can address the immediate financial needs of nonprofits by offering quick reimbursements for initial expenses, ensuring operational continuity before subsequent funds are received.
3. **Coordination with Education and Training Providers:** Work with education providers to ensure nonprofits are responsive to the changing needs of the economy and community. Invest in partnerships between schools, universities, vocational training centers, and other educational institutions to provide education and training programs.

¹¹⁰ "Can You Get an SBA Loan for Charities and Other Nonprofits?", SouthEast Bank, 2023, <https://www.southeastbank.com/blog/can-you-get-an-sba-loan-for-charities-and-other-nonprofits/#:~:text=Both%20SBA%207%20%28a%29%20loans%20and%20504%20loans,basis%2C%20making%20them%20impossible%20for%20nonprofits%20to%20obtain.>

¹¹¹ "California Nonprofit Equity Initiative", California Association of Nonprofits, <https://calnonprofits.org/california-nonprofit-equity-initiative/>.

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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.



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