

**THE COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

Listening Tour Analysis: prepared by Michelle Rich and
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The following data is compiled from community comments and information provided by representatives during a series of listening sessions that were conducted in 2016-17. In total there were seven sessions, one for each region of Mendocino County – North Coast, South Coast, Anderson Valley, Round Valley, North County, Willits, Ukiah-area. Four of the sessions were community meetings with facilitated conversations. Three of the sessions were panels. In total approximately, 90 people participated as well as the board of the Community Foundation. The theme of each was intended to be education and workforce development. Each group was comprised of key representatives of the education sector or business community in each region.

While there were distinct programs and initiatives in each region, the following reflects findings that were in common across the county or were of particular note in a region.

Strengths:

Predominantly, the strengths of each region focused on the people, sense of community, natural beauty, and natural resources of the region. Many communities have a strong sense of self-reliance and helping each other and also reported strong community groups, active volunteers, and successful partnerships between non-profits, businesses and schools. Most regions had particular programs that were successful in their region (for example: Anderson Valley Education Foundation, many youth focused programs in Round Valley, the partnership with the fire department in Laytonville for youth,

North Coast

70% of the students in Fort Bragg school district come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many are from families with no history of college-going culture. Local schools have pioneered a relationship with Mendocino College that is reversing this trend. By 2018, every high school student will also be a Mendocino College student. Eventually 30 college credits will be offered at the high school, which will give students a huge advantage. Fort Bragg Unified School District requires students take a Career and College success class at Mendocino College that develops goal setting and financial preparedness skills.

Mendocino College is helping the coastal school districts promote a college-going culture in the student population by offering dual enrollment at the high school and college. The college offers Career Technical Education programs such as Human Services, Entrepreneurship, Culinary Arts, Child Development, and Fine Woodworking. The Krenov woodworking program, formerly administered by College of the Redwoods, is world renown. Mendocino College is carrying on this tradition and encouraging younger students to pursue trades such as woodworking.

Action Network's program for job readiness on the South Coast). Particular strengths across the county included:

- Scholarship programs;
- Successful places and businesses;
- Healthcare organizations as employers and job training (clinics and hospitals);
- Tourism and agriculture;
- Libraries and granges (having a place for the community to gather);
- B Corp businesses (Harvest Market and Village Hearth);
- Chamber of commerce and merchant associations.
- Valuable CTE and career pathways programs (predominant in five of the seven regions);



Residents in Laytonville discuss opportunities.

Challenges:

Housing and infrastructure were issues that came up across the board as challenges. However, there were other common issues related to education and the economy. One of the primary difficulties is attracting and retaining employees. Some of the other most mentioned issues were:

- Competition of marijuana;
- Lack of living wage jobs;
- Customer service skills of employees;
- Drug screening (both having accessible services and finding people who can pass);
- Unable to offer competitive benefits;

Laytonville

Laytonville is in its fifteenth year of providing emergency services training to high school students; originally started as a Boy Scouts Explorer Program and evolving into a Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathway in the schools. Currently five pathways are offered: Building Trades, Culinary Arts, (in a partnership with Mendocino College) as well as Computer Technology, the Arts, and Emergency Response/Fire.

Sue Carberry, Assistant Fire Chief at the Laytonville Fire Department, recruits students to the program who show an interest in pursuing a career as a firefighter, EMT, or medical technician. The Fire Department instructs students in the required training. Lead instructor, John Nielson, has twelve students this year. One participant described the lengths to which the Fire Department was willing to assist him in his career path - "They will send you to the Cal Fire Academy so that you can get a job right after high school. They pull together and make it happen for you." Laytonville Fire Department raised money to have one of their students take the fire engineers exam. The program is mutually beneficial; the fire department relies on their students to help get equipment in the shape it needs to be. Due to the close partnership between the school and the fire department many of the students involved will graduate with the training and hours required to get a job right away.



Willits employer, Sparetime Supply discusses hiring challenges.

- Lack of diverse employment opportunities;
- Especially hard to fill middle management positions.

There were also many common barriers to economic development across the county:

- Regulatory barriers from the county;
- Closure of large employers;
- Need for current market information;
- Lack of networking among businesses;
- Transportation, infrastructure, remoteness;
- Community reputation;
- Internet infrastructure.

Education had similar challenges in terms of attracting and retaining qualified employees. In small regions in particular, staffing for educational institutions was the prime concern, not only in terms of attracting and retaining qualified teachers, but also in the high turnover of school leadership. This is related both to the aging population and teachers retiring, an overall shortage of teachers statewide, as well as the unique challenges of small rural communities in providing competitive compensation and housing options.

Willits

"We have a marked increase in Willits students who are pursuing a career in the medical field," says Tim King of Savings Bank of Mendocino, who reviews scholarships for the Rotary Club. "I think this is a direct result of the Scrubs Program." Started in 2005 by MCOE as a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway, the Scrubs Program is an elective at Willits High School that offers comprehensive education in introductory medicine.

Instructor Jennifer Barrett exposes her students to medical terminology, anatomy, and biology. Guest speakers teach first aid, CPR, and AED training. Little Lake Fire Department members volunteer to certify the students in CERT, (Community Service Response Team). Barrett has developed a collaborative relationship with the new Howard Memorial Hospital. Students under 18 can apply for a six-week rotation to learn Medical Procedure, Lab Skills, and Physical Therapy within the state-of-the-art facility. This innovative relationship gives students first-hand experience with the careers that could sustain them in the future.

CFMC Board President Greg Nelson hears from Representatives of Mendocino College, Grange School of Adaptive Agriculture and West Company



Additional challenges affecting the educational sector include:

- Disconnect between courses offered and available jobs;
- Students not completing college;
- Few resources for schools;
- Training in the trades diminished;
- Not teaching life skills.

Other factors that should not be overlooked that came up as challenges include the aging population, barriers between population groups, and disagreement about what development should look like. It should also be noted that the unincorporated areas in the county have a unique need for governmental support and advocacy, especially the regions that do not have municipal advisory councils.

Two issues came up in Anderson Valley that would have bearing on the county as a whole: possible changes to the Affordable Care Act and immigration. Given the important role that healthcare facilities play in our communities, loss of funding for rural healthcare could be potentially devastating not just for the health and well-being of individuals, but also for the economic returns that are generated by these large employers. Changes in immigration could impact the availability of seasonal workers and the agricultural industry in particular.



Junior Achievement volunteers

Untapped resources or opportunities

Largely, there were not many common untapped resources or opportunities as a whole. Each community did have specific resources that were under-utilized or in development. Specifically related to education, it should be noted that there are underutilized trade-teaching facilities in both Willits and Ukiah (welding, automotive). Related to

Ukiah

Investigations by the Workforce Investment Board, The Community Foundation and others have found that significant opportunity exists to connect students with local job opportunities. Thankfully, UUSD has worked with MCOE to develop twelve Career Technical Pathways (the most in the county) to instruct in many different fields like Machine Shop, Agriculture, and Health Occupations, to name a few.

Ukiah Unified School District (UUSD) has also partnered with the Community Foundation, Junior Achievement and a number of local businesses to bring business volunteers together with area schools to expand student access to real world job experience. Volunteers speak in 2nd-grade classrooms, and engage high school students by showing them other parts of the community that they may not otherwise see. Job shadows at local businesses that have been very successful. For instance, Parducci Winery demonstrated its pioneering water treatment system, Adventist Health Ukiah Valley opened its doors so students could learn about all aspects of the operation, and Factory Pipe demonstrated how to build mufflers for Polaris vehicles. To date, 480 second graders and 122 high school students have participated in this program and that number continues to grow each year. This is a developing program that needs additional community support to reach its growth potential.

housing it should also be noted that Willits reported their real estate market was strong and that they had resolved some of their water infrastructure challenges. It would be worth exploring what is working here in more detail.

That said there were some common themes that emerged including:

- Communicating and connecting resources with people;
- Beautiful location;
- Returning community members;
- Improving community curb appeal;
- Using technology to overcome barriers;
- Engaging seasonal residents;
- Senior population.

Other Thoughts:

Communication was a common theme and there were several interesting suggestions related to that:

- County communications person;
- Countywide news source;
- Pulling people together.

Additionally, there were several areas that had both positive and negative aspects discussed that cannot go without mention: the Willits Bypass and the legalization of marijuana. Both are controversial and will (and are) having a profound effect on the economic well-being of Mendocino County.

Anderson Valley

Affordable housing has reached crisis levels in the Boonville and Philo areas and the Anderson Valley Housing Association has met the challenge head on. Formed in 1987 the group manages two affordable housing properties, twelve units in Boonville and farm worker housing in Philo. They hosted a successful Housing Forum in February that brought over fifty residents out on a particularly stormy night. A conversation has begun and specific initiatives are being explored. Responsible business owners such as Roederer Estates have stepped up to provide housing for their employees.

Members of the Anderson Valley Community Services District are exploring the feasibility of water and sewer system development in Boonville. These changes would allow for infill construction in town. Current septic systems are impacted by high rain events. Two AVHA board members are specifically interested in a granny unit project to develop second dwelling units on single lots and are working with residents to develop a set of engineered designs, materials list and expected budget for community use.

South Coast

The Action Network in Point Arena provides career development education to 150 high school students through their Dream It, Be It program. 64 students participated in a day-long retreat, offering them the opportunity to assess their career interests and to network with teachers, mentors, and community members. This fosters relationships that can support them in their current and future career aspirations. Students had the opportunity to initiate professional contacts in their educational, career, and potential entrepreneurial pursuits. Participants will be mentored by these professionals and encouraged to become vibrant members of the local community workforce. Students completing the DIBI program will be more competitive. This is a much needed and valuable opportunity for youth who have no formal CTE courses offered at their public high school.

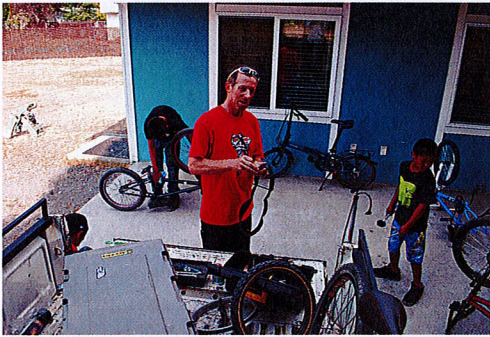


South Coast residents share insights.

Round Valley

The Round Valley Indian Health Center is a thriving community hub. In addition to providing the only local healthcare option, the group also partners with Dean Meyer who volunteers to host “Bike Wednesdays,” a free after-school program where kids can gather to learn cycle maintenance. The group promotes physical health and well-being by organizing bike rides throughout the valley. Volunteer groups like OWN (Our Wilderness Now) lead student field trips to raise environmental and community awareness.

Due to a housing shortage, the Health Center struggles to recruit resident doctors, dentists, and nurses. They have taken the creative step of providing a rental unit for medical staff but acknowledge that they have a need for even more units.



Dean Meyer demonstrates bike maintenance

Summary:

When the board of the Community Foundation embarked on the Listening Tour they wanted to hear first-hand what was working, what the challenges are, and how the Community Foundation can be most effective as an economic and strategic partner.

The consensus was clear - access to housing is a problem county-wide. It is acknowledged that this is a crisis nationally but there are specific local parameters that residents are dealing with. Laytonville has water availability for new homes but is not incorporated and has no sewer system. Round Valley has a sewer system that can accommodate growth but there is not enough water pressure to meet the requirements of residential sprinkler systems. Anderson Valley and the Mendocino Coast deal with constant competition to their housing inventory from vacation rentals and second homes. Financing development, permitting, and other regulatory hurdles continue to be a challenge.

Mendocino County communities are addressing the housing issue in innovative ways. The Round Valley Tribal Health Clinic provides a rental unit for doctors and nurses. The City of Ukiah and Fort Bragg are encouraging granny-unit infill development. The City of Willits has increased water availability for growth by developing a secondary water source. The Community Foundation is aware that many parties are working to address this crisis. To assist these efforts the Board of Directors has chosen to create an inventory of local organizations providing housing, detailing who is doing what and their barriers to success. Community Foundation staff is crafting a single-page status sheet listing relevant benchmarks and data related to housing affordability. The Foundation is hosting a forum on housing with experts in the field to inform the Board on most effective next steps.

The Community Foundation has been focused on student mentoring and workforce development as part of its Strategic Plan. It is rewarding to hear of successful programs that engage our youth occurring county-wide. Hands-on career development is allowing students

a leg up to join the workforce. Employers throughout the region are concerned about the lack of qualified candidates and connecting these two groups continues to be a challenge. There is a demonstrated need for job shadowing and mentors within the business community. The Community Foundation will continue to facilitate these relationships throughout Mendocino County.

The Listening Tour revealed a county filled with resilience and creativity. Each community visited by the Board has engaged residents who have pulled together to accomplish much more than they could do in isolation. Innovative collaborations between schools, private employers, the college, and hardworking volunteers are improving the way of life in Mendocino County. The Community Foundation of Mendocino County stands poised to further support these efforts.



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For participant rosters or detailed notes on each regional Listening Tour please contact Holly Madrigal, Program Officer at (707) 468-9882 x 101 or holly@communityfound.org

