



# Proposal

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Development Center

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# RECOVERY



- ▶ In the coming years, recovery will be the primary focus of Mendocino County as it moves past the current pandemic-induced recession.
- ▶ An economic reimagining centered around the concepts of diversity and growth will ensure that the future is characterized by resilience in the face of economic shocks.
- ▶ The County of Mendocino can facilitate resiliency by first improving on its economic development ecosystem and then tackling its adverse prevailing challenges.

# Mendocino County Data Points

Over 75% of the population had **less than a Bachelor's degree** compared to 65% for the state

23% of households have **incomes of less than \$25,000** compared to the state at 15%

The pandemic and subsequent economic downturn caused **31% of all small businesses countywide shuttered their doors by the end of 2020**

*Beacon Economics*

- Mendocino is undergoing significant demographic change, at rates that outpace the state overall; outmigration and age dynamics are leading to stagnation and more recently, depopulation.
- Mendocino's labor force and job base has experienced suboptimal growth following the decline of timber-focused manufacturing.
- A lack of growth and diversification in traded, export-oriented industries will continue to diminish Mendocino over the long-run.
- Staunch existential challenges – ranging from wildfires to housing affordability to broadband connectivity – are working toward the county's detriment.



# Sector Growth

*What makes a sector a key contributor to growth is not simply its size but the extent to which it drives **innovation, cluster development, and increased investment** in the region.*

## **The challenge Mendocino faces is:**

- ▶ The three largest private-sector industries - Health Care & Social Services, Retail Trade, and Accommodation & Food are not reliable drivers of sustainable growth
- ▶ The two largest traded sectors, Manufacturing and Agriculture unlikely to see a resurgence in the region due to consolidation, technology adoption, and rising operational costs. These industries are very susceptible to economic shocks and environmental hazards



# Reason to be Optimistic

Innovations in the use of mass timber for green building, the reuse of wildfire-damaged wood to produce renewable energy resources, and the development of advanced agriculture technology (Ag-Tech) and the Blue Economy provide a glimpse into what a reinvigorated Mendocino County economy may look like over the coming years.

For such a future to come to fruition, stakeholders (which include but are not limited to public sector agencies, economic development organizations, nonprofits, firms, workers, community-based organizations, and residents) need to agree upon a **shared vision and establish common goals** before attempting to change.



# STRATEGY

## partnership

Create a public-private partnership committed to countywide economic planning and development.

## coordination

Coordinate with agencies to connect economic development to an improved talent pipeline

## identification

Identify and encourage alternative solutions to core economic development challenges

## dialogue

Foster productive dialogue and cooperation to build a stronger business assistance networks

## data collection

Establish baseline metrics  
o secure resources to advance comprehensive economic development strategies

Ensure Mendocino County's economic development ecosystem is resilient in the face of evolving challenges

# ROADMAP

<b>Bolster the county's economic development infrastructure</b>	<b>Strengthen the small business &amp; entrepreneurship environment</b>	<b>Build, support and retain a robust &amp; adaptable County workforce</b>	<b>Address housing affordability and barriers to new development</b>	<b>Expand the regional broadband access</b>
Establish a Mendocino County Economic Development Agency tasked with developing and implementing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	Survey the local business community to assess the existing business assistance infrastructure and identify bottlenecks, service gaps, and opportunities	Create talent pipeline for high school and college students through curricula and experiences geared towards more advanced opportunities in local industries.	Establish joint Housing Committee – with an emphasis on renters and socioeconomically disadvantaged households traditionally underrepresented in community discussions	Adopt a “Dig Once” initiative in the region to offset costs by installing a conduit and fiber during construction projects,
Create a public-private partnership charged with countywide economic planning and development.	Work to increase bank relationships and small business community to develop special loan products to increase lending to rural areas.	Foster adult career pathways for individuals who are interested in pursuing higher paying jobs outside of agriculture or hospitality and tourism	Conduct at least two working groups annually to be responsible for implementation and monitoring of collective goals and priority areas.	Eliminate the student digital divide by ensuring all K-12 students have access to online distance learning infrastructure.
Build new connections, strengthen existing networks, pursue joint initiatives, and address risk	Review regulations and check for conflict between County and municipal departments, and streamline permitting and other regulatory processes.	Special emphasis should be placed on up-skilling low-skilled, low-income, veterans, underemployed, and unemployed individuals	Promote alternative housing tenure and/or housing types for seasonal workers to stabilize the agriculture and tourism & hospitality workforce.	Implement an outreach strategy aimed at increasing digital literacy among parents and guardians
establish a pool of grant funds through partnerships that stakeholders could apply towards advancing collective economic development initiatives.	Establish a local relief fund with a blend of financing options, and be prepared to halt or defer financial burdens placed on small businesses as needed	Provide ancillary support such as childcare, transportation, and counseling services for low-income, underemployed, and unemployed population who need such services	Change regulations to remove barriers, streamline processing, and reduce costs for the development of housing.	Expand public and mobile WiFi hotspot infrastructure and allocate funds to provide hot spot devices for low-income families to ensure access for students easily access

Condensed version



# OUR PROPOSAL

We propose to fill the need for an economic development agency to implement a comprehensive economic development program over three years that serves as an information clearing house, helping stakeholders secure funds and work collectively to streamline governmental processes that inhibit economic development.

## **PROJECT GOALS (Year 1)**

- Create a countywide economic development agency that will serve as an information clearing house for the advancement of industry, workforce, and capital
- Coordinate grant activities to capture additional state and federal infrastructure funding
- Provide recommendations for improved and streamlined governmental processes that currently inhibit economic development
- Orchestrate the ongoing implementation of the economic resiliency and CEDS plans.





# DELIVERABLES

Establishment of County's **Key Performance Indicators** (KPI) on economic performance

Create the **economic development roadmap** for distribution

Provide **Semi-annual reports** to the Board of Supervisors on economic indicators and efforts

A means to keep **remote regions informed** about economic activities

A method to **lower barriers** to entry for businesses, and streamline processes

Create new **business friendly content** for the county website

A program to **advocate for more funding** to ensure improved business development

Prepare a **business toolkit** guide to launch more successful businesses

Engage with the business community in **long-term disaster planning**

# MEASURABLE RESULTS

*“The challenge therein lies in garnering community support and orchestrating a concerted effort among economic development stakeholders – which is what the county lacks and sincerely needs. Tackling these issues first will lay the practical and intellectual groundwork for the transformation of Mendocino’s economy. “*

*-Beacon Economics*

- Stronger business assistance network
- Grant clearinghouse to measure grants applied/received
- Established Key Performance Indicators on economic performance
- Semi-annual report tied to key indicators and economic development efforts
- A more informed constituency on what can/can't be accomplished
- A common set of guiding principles for stakeholders to conduct their work and to measure success
- Once tools are created metrics on usage will be provided
- Business toolkit for use by all agencies to guide sustainable business development