



# A Message from the Director

*by Patricia Virgen, Executive Director*

As we reflect on the first half of the year, I am excited to share the progress we have made in developing new programs and initiatives to advance our community. Starting in July, our WIOA Youth program was transitioned in-house. To ensure a seamless and improved transition, we hired new staff and are exploring ways to enhance the program. In June, we had our first Youth Job Fair with over 400 youth in attendance.

Furthermore, we are collaborating with consultant David Shinder, to work on our strategic priority goals established by the Workforce Development Board (WDB). These goals include Promotion & Advocacy, Increased Coordination, Shared Prosperity, Business Engagement, and Fund Development. This partnership is crucial in aligning our efforts with these priorities to better serve our community.

I am thrilled to announce that, as of May 21, 2024, the Board of Supervisors approved the allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support two new initiatives:

**1. Stockton Chamber-Stockton Takes Action Against Retail Theft Program (STAART) and Security Camera Grant Program:** This initiative addresses the critical issue of retail theft, which has been significantly impacting our local businesses. The STAART program aims to mitigate these losses and support our business community in reclaiming their revenue and time.

**2. Shop San Joaquin Program:** Utilizing BluDot Technologies, Inc.'s Open Rewards platform, this innovative mobile application encourages local shopping by rewarding consumers for their purchases at eligible businesses within San Joaquin County. This program not only promotes local commerce but also strengthens our community by keeping spending local. To learn more about the program, visit <https://45522635.hs-sites.com/shop-san-joaquin-bludot-2024>

These programs demonstrate our commitment to supporting and uplifting our county. With more initiatives on the horizon, we are dedicated to making a tangible difference, one program at a time.

We are also diligently working on the San Joaquin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This initiative focuses on cultivating an environment that supports a sustainable economic future for the county's businesses and residents. Our goal is to create a five-year plan with strategies that align with existing plans and initiatives, fostering an environment that supports business development, job creation, and the economic security of residents. As a first step in the CEDS process, San Joaquin County is seeking input from businesses and residents through surveys. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping a thriving economic future for our community, visit <https://45522635.hs-sites.com/san-joaquin-county-ceds-update-2024-2029>

Lastly, I am honored to serve on the Steering Committee for CA Jobs First (formerly CERF) and regionally established as North Valley Thrive. This committee brings together various organizations from different sectors to collaborate on the Northern San Joaquin CJF planning grant application. This initiative provides a platform for Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin Counties to forge a shared vision for our region's future, enhancing cooperation and mutual benefit.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our community. Together, we are building a stronger, more prosperous future.