



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

Executive Office

DARCIE ANTLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CLERK OF THE BOARD

501 Low Gap Rd. Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

Email: ceo@mendocinocounty.gov
Website: www.mendocinocounty.gov

Office: (707) 463-4441
Fax: (707) 463-5649

Economic Development Division-Executive Office CEO Report February 2026

Introduction

Staff continued to advance economic development projects. This report presents data for the economic overview, state outlook, federal outlook, Redwood Region RISE, SMEDD, and 2025 project highlights.

Mendocino County Economy Overview

- As of 2024, the region's population increased by 2.6% since 2019, growing by 2,243. Population is expected to increase by 0.4% between 2024 and 2029, adding 368.
- From 2019 to 2024, jobs declined by 2.2% in Mendocino County, CA from 38,335 to 37,480. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 4.4% by 6.6%. As the number of jobs declined, the labor force participation rate decreased from 53.7% to 49.8% between 2019 and 2024.
- Median household income is \$64.7K, \$13.9K below the national median household income of \$78.5K.
- Concerning educational attainment, 14.8% of Mendocino County, CA residents possess a Bachelor's Degree (6.7% below the national average), and 9.1% hold an Associate's Degree (0.3% above the national average).
- The top three industries in 2024 are Education and Hospitals (Local Government), Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals, and Individual and Family Services.
Source: Lightcast

A more detailed economic overview is in **Attachment A: Mendocino County Economy Overview**

State Outlook

Beacon Economics published a 2026 state outlook. According to Beacon Economics, uncertainty remains the dominant force shaping economic behavior in 2026. That uncertainty stems from a mix of negative popular narratives as well as actual policies – both existing and proposed. Most likely, the labor market will remain soft in the near term, with modest employment gains and elevated unemployment persisting. Job growth is expected to stay concentrated in Health Care, Social Assistance, and Government, while goods-producing industries, including Construction and Manufacturing, continue to face headwinds. Housing starts and permits are likely to remain subdued early in the year, with any notable pickup dependent on clearer policy signals and improved financing conditions in later months. Even so, California's economy may continue to grow at a pace that rivals or exceeds the nation, supported by high-value industries and resilient consumer demand. The full report can be found at

<https://beaconecon.com/publications/the-beacon-outlook/california-outlook/>

Federal Outlook

Beacon Economics has also published a 2026 federal outlook. According to Beacon Economics, early 2026 sees a modest acceleration. The government shutdown left much of the core data lagging, but what did filter through points to more of the same—decent economic growth despite soft labor markets. Negative growth in the first quarter of the year was offset by strong second and third quarters, leaving overall growth at about 2.5%. The U.S. economy remains stable, with remarkably little to distinguish between Biden year four and Trump year one. The full report can be found at <https://beaconecon.com/publications/the-beacon-outlook/united-states-outlook/>

Redwood Region RISE

Redwood Region RISE (Resilient Inclusive Sustainable Economy) is a coalition of 150+ member organizations engaging over a thousand residents across Tribal Lands, Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties.

In 2025, RRRISE announced Catalyst grants to advance high impact projects across the Redwood Region: Tribal Lands, Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties.

The awardees include the following projects:

- LBS GRID Workforce Training Tiny Home Construction (\$331,702) - Building Lives By Building Structure Hoopa 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization (BLBS) – Combining affordable housing construction with renewable energy integration while training Native American youth.
- Career Pathways: Fire, Forest, Fish & Facilities (\$1,127,936) - Trees Foundation - Creating sustainable wage opportunities in natural resource jobs across three counties.
- Del Norte Performing Arts and Civic Center (\$268,250) - Partnership for Performing Arts - Cultural hub serving as performance venue, educational space, and emergency resource.
- Fire Lines & Fiber Bioregions: A Regional Wool Industry Cluster (\$607,856) – Kaos Sheep Outfit - Developing sustainable fiber production and exploring a Regional Wool Industry Cluster.
- Lake County Healthcare Education and Simulator (\$650,000) - Lake County Economic Development Corporation - Enhancing healthcare education and workforce development through simulation facilities.
- Middletown Rancheria Community RISE Project (\$500,000) - Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California - Addressing Tribal community challenges through housing, climate resilience, and cultural preservation.

- North Coast Resilient Food Systems Initiative (\$2,306,574) - Connecting Del Norte Meat Processing Facility - Hmong Association of Crescent City with North Coast Food System Network - North Coast Growers' Association to strengthen regional food systems.
- Redwood Corridor SEEDS Network (\$450,000) - North Coast Opportunities (NCO) - Creating community food hubs along Highway 101 to address food security and access.
- Tribal Energy Sovereignty Initiative (\$795,316) - Pinoleville Solar Port & Renewable Energy Workforce Development - Pinoleville Pomo Nation with Red Hills Bioenergy Facility & Central Wood Processing Plant (\$345,316) - Scotts Valley Energy Corporation to advance renewable energy solutions and workforce training.
- Timber & Workforce Development Initiative (\$1,959,897) - Three interconnected initiatives: Carving a Legacy: Tribal Traditions, Woodworking, and Workforce Development - Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe; Connecting Mass Timber to Regional Housing and Building Needs - Mad River Mass Timber; and Developing a Climate Forward Workforce and Innovation Pipeline - Forest WRX Alliance.

*Projects in **BOLD** are located in or benefit Mendocino County.

The RRRISE Collaborative will focus on the following priorities for 2026:

- Channeling investment into our sector strategies
- Advancing community-endorsed projects toward implementation
- Strengthening regional resilience and climate strategies
- Aligning local needs with statewide economic development initiatives
- Building long-term systems and partnerships that sustain regional transformation

SMEDD Update

The Sonoma Mendocino County Economic Development District (SMEDD) was formed through a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) between Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. The Board from each County appoints the SMEDD board members. On January 23, 2026, the SMEDD Board held a special meeting and voted to temporarily suspend SMEDD and pause participation in the EDA grant. The SMEDD Board intends to explore other restructuring options within the next few months. More information on SMEDD can be found at <https://smedd.specialdistrict.org/>

2025 Division Highlights

- Closed out the 2021 Microenterprise Technical Assistance Grant Program. This program was funded by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) with a performance period of April 2023 to August 2025. Through the program, 232 clients received one-on-one advising, 120 new entrepreneurs were onboarded, 101 existing businesses received individualized support to expand, and 120 individualized service plans were developed.
- Developed Program Guidelines for a new 2025 Microenterprise Technical Assistance Program and Business Loan Program. These two programs are expected to launch in 2026.

- Facilitated six industry-specific economic development meetings around the county that identified unmet needs by industries to inform collaborative activities for 2026.
- Expanded the County’s internship program through collaboration with Workforce Alliance North Bay (WANB) and Mendocino College.
- Launched the Economic Development Webpage with resources for businesses.
- Began outreach to real estate agents to start a list of “ready to go” parcels for the state’s Business Ready Sites Program
- Provided over 180 hours of staff support to the SMEDD board.
- Issued loan forgiveness of \$84,929 to Happy Rides through the CDBG COVID-19 Business Assistance and Recovery Loan Program.
- Receipted over \$56K in CDBG Program Income for future economic development projects.
- Held a public hearing in November 2025 to receive approval to submit a CDBG application for Centro Negocio West Spanish Language Microenterprise Technical Assistance Project, which aims to empower low- to moderate-income Spanish-speaking microentrepreneurs with culturally responsive counseling, training, workshops, and networking. The application is targeted to be submitted in early 2026.