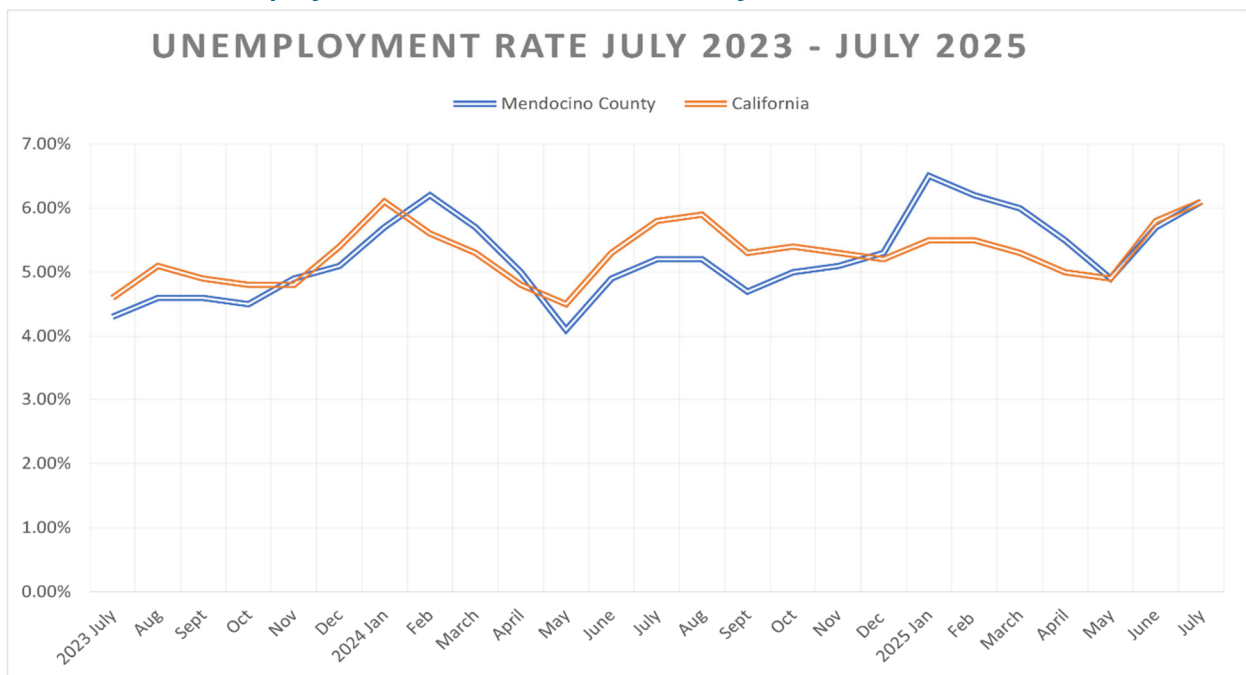




Introduction

In July and August 2025, the Economic Development Division met with stakeholders to advance projects developed from industry sector meetings, provided technical assistance to local businesses, met with EDA staff and stakeholders regarding the future of SMEDD, and held the Agriculture Sector Meeting (7/17) and the Forest Health Sector Meeting (9/17). Visit the [Economic Development Division](#) page for more details.

COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL ECONOMIC DATA AND INDICATORS Unemployment Rate in Mendocino County and California Source: [CA EDD](#)



Total Number of Listings in Mendocino County 2016 – 2025

More houses are on the market in Mendocino County than at any time in the last five years. This may indicate a ‘cooling off’ or a downturn in the real estate market and price decreases.



Source: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TOTLISCOU6045>

Mendocino County Economic Data

2023 Median Household Income: \$67,454 [US Census Bureau](#)

2023 Households with Income under \$50,000/yr: 36.3% [US Census Bureau](#)

2023 Number of Households (Estimated): 34,951 [US Census Bureau](#)

2024 Population: 89,174 Source: Lightcast Q4 Dataset

Civilian Labor Force: 37,510 Source: [CA EDD](#)

Labor Force as Percent of Population: 42% (Compared to 62.4% for California) Source: [CA EDD](#)

July 2025 Median Sold Price of Existing Single-Family Homes: \$567,000 Source: [California Association of Realtors](#)

Given the median income and the participation in the civilian labor force in Mendocino County, this data shows us two things. One, we have a larger population of individuals not in the labor force, particularly retirees who are on a limited fixed income. Secondly, given median income, both retirees households and households with children are particularly impacted by inflation, high insurance costs and fuel prices.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATES

Economic Development by Industry: Upcoming Sector Meetings

Division staff continue to hold meetings for the economic development by industry sector series to foster collaboration and create actionable goals for economic sustainability and growth. Five meetings have been held in 2025. Upcoming meetings for the remainder of the calendar year are as follows:

November 2025: Arts and Tourism – Details TBA

Economic Development by Industry: Sector Projects

Sector projects have been developed from the completed *Economic Development by Industry* meetings. Each project is based on the feedback and input from the public sector meetings. Division staff are working with other County departments, and community partners to move each project forward. Below is a list of current projects. The attached appendix contains more detail for each project.

Forest Health and Sustainability – (Meeting held 9/17/2025)

- Due to the timing of reporting, projects will be included in the next CEO Report

Agriculture – (Meeting held 7/17/2025)

- Explore the feasibility of animal processing facility with regional partners in Lake, Sonoma County. Research grant opportunities and possible operators
- Work with Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (WANB), Mendocino Wine Growers Association (MWGA), Mendocino County Farm Bureau (MCFB) to coordinate WANB resources to align with training needs
- Survey local farmers and agricultural producers regarding missing support services, relay information to local SBDC, chambers and other agencies to share with local entrepreneurs as potential new business or additional services
- Facilitate establishing a committee to develop county-wide/regional branding, or support further development of “Love Local Mendo” buy local campaign with Visit Ukiah
- Legislative platform – additions, edits for continued support of farmers at state and federal level, or set up channels for communication between Farm Bureau and Agriculture Department
- Coordinate educational opportunities for farmers to learn cost saving or effective ways to develop additional cash flow streams

Behavioral Health – (Meeting held 3/3/2025)

- Mendocino College Behavioral Health Internships
- Stipend Structure for County Internships

Cannabis – (Meeting held 3/27/2025)

- Collaborative Marketing w/Tourism, Wine, Arts and Heritage
- Co-Operative Regional Branding
- Appellations
- Microbusiness License Code Updates
- Explore Feasibility for inclusion in the Business Improvement District

Construction and Home Hardening – (Meeting held 5/21/2025)

- Collaboration with Mendocino Fire Safe Council, North Coast Builders Exchange and Mendocino County Office of Education for student education and work experience in home hardening through existing training programs

- Workshop or training for Contractors and construction students
- Support creation of informational or instructional materials, videos and resources in one place for professionals; support distribution of materials through local building departments

Please see attached “Economic Development by Sector Projects” for a more detailed update.

CDBG PI Microenterprise Technical Assistance Grant

The CDBG PI Microenterprise Technical Assistance Grant (\$407,385) has been awarded as of 4/30/2025 and the program manual was submitted to the consent calendar for the September 9th Board of Supervisors Meeting. The grant will provide in-house technical support to microenterprises. The main objective is to help microenterprises overcome the various barriers, especially those related to government regulations, permits, licenses, and other intersections of business and government. Staff are working on a related grant application for Business Assistance Loans.

Sonoma Economic Development District (SMEDD)

The Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District is an Economic Development District formed as a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with Sonoma County in 2016. It is recognized by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) as an Economic Development District and is responsible for maintaining the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.

With the creation of California Jobs First, there is redundancy in economic development strategic planning. Staff at both County of Sonoma and Mendocino are exploring options for future of SMEDD with consideration of return on investment and budgetary constraints.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant Applications Status

Submitted Fall of 2024 – Award not granted – The **EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC)** Grant Program announced their grant awardees in late August. The County of Mendocino’s application was not selected for the award.

Small Business Technical Assistance

Division staff continue to manage the Microenterprise Technical Assistance Grant contracted to WEST Business Development Center, as well as providing in-house technical assistance to local businesses. During the previous quarter, eight hours of technical assistance was provided to six unique clients.

Agriculture Sector Meeting Notes - Meeting date Thursday 7/17/2025

This document contains a summary of the meeting notes from the Agricultural Sector Meeting on 7/17/2025. Participants were asked to discuss and brainstorm as a group based on the following categories: what issues are priority, what is working, what resources do we have access to, what

resources do we have access to, and what projects can we create? The end goal is to create actionable projects the division can move forward.

What issues are a priority? (What's not working?)

- Lots of regulation, costs add up – bad policies/lobbying – hard to follow regulations, farms/businesses getting out of agriculture
- Water availability and cost increases
- Small farmer getting squeezed out – not protecting small farms (little guy vs. big guy)
- Land access – hard for new or younger farmers to afford land
- Consolidation of ownership, small farmers are selling to large farmers
- Big interests (businesses) own increasingly more assets, high entry costs limits access to larger interests
- Labor rules – Overtime rules have changed, must pay overtime after 8 hours/day or 40 hours/week, used to be 10 hours/day 60 hours/week. Change has created less work and increased costs
- Horizontal or vertical integration for small farmer creates increased risks and compliance, increased logistics, increase in staff – particularly hard in this market, costs are high and create a barrier
- Having to be dynamic – shift/adapt volatile markets/demands, especially challenging for small scale producers
- Lack of meat processing facilities – need to be at scale (that is sustainable), all are out of area/far distance to drive, takes commitment and more expense
- Who comes next? Succession planning, next generation may not be interested – seeing this in grapes and wine
- Automation/consolidation/mechanization are taking away jobs
- Farmers are leveraged with existing debt (line of credit), if there's a downturn, property/farm value decreases, line of credit becomes 'upside down', no available capital to pivot into something new
- ICE – immigration policy will affect farm worker population

What is working?

- With decline in grape values and cannabis, people are trying things, ex: truffles, acorns, agave
- Hoop house infrastructure out there, seeing a transition from cannabis to vegetable and fruit farmers. An increase in farmers market applications indicates farmers are trying something new. Ex: 50 acres in potter valley of blueberries, still need less risk to try new things
- Mendo-Lake Food Hub – market what we offer
- Incubator programs if you have the right people/applicants and support
- Market match for consumers at farmers market and Good Farm Fund Grants for farmers have both been effective
- View of Mendocino County as a clean, natural/rugged, unpolluted region, for producing agricultural. Could build off this identity for branding and use our uniqueness in storytelling. (ex: Mendo Farms Restaurant)

- New technology available: virtual fencing is now more affordable, especially for cattle. Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC) is testing effectiveness.
- Leadership Mendocino Program creates educational, cohort/friendship building and buy-in to the community within the county
- West Young Entrepreneur Program/college partnership program

What resources do we have access to?

- Organizations cooperating to share resources so they can compete (lots of little guys together vs big guy)
- Leverage knowledge and Mendocino reputation to market clean, open land/nature as place to visit, eat, hike, etc. Marketing collaboration – visit Mendocino, Ukiah Chambers
- Educational and training resources available through Mendocino College, West Business Development Center, HREC
- WANB has resources available for:
 - Worker trainings – covers cost of the trainer, also has resources to locate a qualified trainer
 - Job training and internship, wage reimbursement program, career point Mendocino can help with reskilling when employees laid off
- West Business Development Center – training and coaching
- CA Human Services – provides farm worker services
- Farm Bureau – provides farm worker trainings
- UCCE - already does in-house training, and could offer training or location too
- Come together to maintain rural community – building thriving ag sector so Ukiah valley doesn't become housing and retail when price of water increases and farmers can't afford, how to keep agriculture feasible, assuming water is still there

Projects we can create w/resources we have to address priorities?

- Regional interest in meat processing facilities/infrastructure (Redwood Region RISE has funded in Del Norte)
- Need Safety Training – bilingual in pesticides DPR, heat/Cal OSHA, FSMA, and sexual harassment
- Basic local support services needed, ex: scale fix/repair – must go to Santa Rosa for this
- Marketing – Cooperative branding, built around commonalities between businesses across sectors
- Support from County Ag Dept:
 - Push back on unfavorable state regulations, voice support for or back the Mendocino Farm Bureau or other agencies, back up from local Ag dept brings validity to other agency's voices
 - Enforce regulation or collect data – need to find funding to do enforcement
 - Crop report – have people to collect data and give to state
- Legislative platform
- Incubator Farm UCCE
- Farm Robotics Program between UCCE, SRJC and Mendocino College

- Love Local – buy local campaign
- Farm worker grants
- Raise Lake Mendocino – future need for water storage with upcoming changes to the Eel/Russian River diversion?
- Examples of what has worked elsewhere:
- Close-loop system for waste (using worms and selling castings): farm innovation and sharing knowledge
- Zoning and strategic development, examples such as Santa Cruz, New Zealand where parks were built at edge of city, development in and up (Urban core is walkable, parks increase quality of life and protects agriculture around city). Could use this approach to urban boundaries for City of Ukiah

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BY SECTOR PROJECTS									
MEETING DATE	SECTOR	SECTOR IDENTIFIED ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY	PROJECT	LEAD ORGANIZATION	ECON DEV ROLE	ESTIMATED TIMELINE	UPDATES	STATUS	TARGETED OUTCOMES
March 3rd 2025	Behavioral Health	Difficulty recruiting and retaining BH workers at all levels	Mendocino College BH Internships	Econ Dev Division, Mendocino College	Lead	Fall 2025	Mendocino College has been connect to Dr. Jenine Miller. College and Econ Dev to coordinate in person event at beginning of fall semester. Met w/Pamela, Molly and Filemon at Mendocino College 5/28/2025	Coordinating w/college for a fall internship program	Placement of Mendocino College Students in County of Mendocino Behavioral Health Department
March 3rd 2025	Behavioral Health	Lack of access to paid internships in region, affects recruitment and hiring path into F/T employment	Stipend Structure for County Internships	Econ Dev Division	Lead	Spring 2026	Met with CoCo 5/9/2025 regarding feasibility of stipend structure	Scheduling meeting with BH Dept head and CoCo to discuss further	Create a stipend structure for payment to interns, to allow for future grant funding opportunities to pay BH interns on a stipend basis.
March 27th 2025	Cannabis	Desire to build cross-industry partnerships	Collaborative Marketing w/Tourism, Wine Arts and Heritage	Econ Dev is lead - will hand off to partner org after meeting 2 or 3	Lead	Fall 2025 for handoff, fall 2026 for deliverables	Held initial meeting w/MCA, GUTBA, RISE on 6/10/2025. Looking for grant opportunities to fund marketing development.	Priorities and projects identified - (1) cannabis tourism market positioning, (2) events for exposure (not consumption), (3) build relationships with Latino and minority communities in cannabis	Support integration of legal cannabis producers and farmers into arts, tourism and wine. Develop cohesive clear market positioning for local cannabis tourism that dispels old bias ('murder mtn') focuses on family/heritage/small farmer/rural living
March 27th 2025	Cannabis	Opportunity to develop regional brand identity around quality, small-farm (organic), heritage cannabis cultivation	Co-Operative or Regional Branding	MCA or GUTBA	Participant	Fall/Winter 2026	Held initial meeting w/MCA, GUTBA, RISE on 6/10/2025 and follow up meeting 8/18/2025. Looking for potential funding and lead for development.	In progress - Sequential project to above Collaborative Marketing	Increase and support local legal cannabis creating niche market/market differentiation
March 27th 2025	Cannabis	Need for ability to differentiate crops and based on regions and climate backed by a regulatory body designation	Appellations	Origins Council and Agriculture Dept	Watching/participant	In-progress	Strategic Meeting 9/5 between Ag Dept and CDFA regarding new Appellations Program	Ag Dept has been working with Origins Council, and set meeting with CDFA	Create designated appellations to help build awareness of uniqueness of cannabis grown within Mendocino County

March 27th 2025	Cannabis	Permitting processes are challenging due to different requirements between state and county for microbusiness license. County microbusiness license has limitations/zoning requirements that limits accessibility to permit acquisition.	Microbusiness License Code Updates	GGC, Haschak, PBS, Cannabis Dept	Participant	Will got to BOS September 2025	GGC met 6/25/2025 - PBS reviewed microbusiness license differences between state and county	GGC and PBS to review microbusiness license for alignment with state microbusiness license and permitting requirements	Adapt code/permitting process that allows for a more streamlined process for applicant in state and county permitting. Review requirements of microbusiness license to increase accessibility to licensing in different zoning or w/o residence on property
March 27th 2025	Cannabis	Desire to build cross-industry partnerships	Explore Feasibility for Inclusion in BID	Econ Dev Division	Lead, will transfer to MCTC if possible	Winter 2025	Contacted CoCo 6/11/2025 about feasibility of inclusion	Ask Visit Mendocino to include cannabis in marketing, events and promotion	Cannabis cultivators and/or dispensaries included in BID/MCTC marketing and campaign
May 21st 2025	Construction Home Hardening Fire Mitigation	Emerging industry - there is a lack of trained or knowledgeable workforce. There is a need to educate youth entering in construction jobs on benefits and practices around home hardening.	Collaboration with MFSC, NCBE and MCOE - student education and work in home-hardening	MFSC and MCOE	Participant	Spring 2026	Attended initial meeting 6/5/25 with MFSC (Scott Cratty) Mendocino College (Noel Woodhouse), MCOE (Eric Crawford), NCBE (Natalie Spackmen). NCBE, MCOE and MFSC are coordinating adding home hardening education to next years curriculum	MFSC, MCOE, NCBE are leading coordination for educational events	Create educational and hands-on experience to youth in construction oriented programs to learn home hardening requirements and skills
May 21st 2025	Construction Home Hardening Fire Mitigation	Emerging industry - there is a lack of trained or knowledgeable workforce in the general contracting and trades professions as to regulatory recommendations and insurance requirements	Workshop/training for Contractors and Construction Students	Econ Dev Division	Lead	Fall/Winter 2026	Met w/IBHS 5/15/2025. IBHS, MFSC agreed to participate in workshop/training for home hardening	Work w/contacts from IBHS, MFSC, UCANR, to develop and coordinate a 1-day workshop at Mendocino College. Use CDBG PI Mirco-Enterprise Funding to fund workshop	Educate current and future contractors on home hardening best practices, priority retrofitting, agency resources, insurance requirements. Create a knowledgeable and skill labor force in home hardening

May 21st 2025	Construction Home Hardening Fire Mitigation	Emerging industry - changing regulatory (zone 0) and insurance requirements. There is a need for accessible, up-to-date, and easy to understand information on best practices and potential requirements for home hardening for contractors, tradesman, and homeowners.	Support creation of information or instructional material, videos and resources in one place for professionals. Support distribution of materials through local building departments	MFSC and Econ Dev Division	Participant	Winter 2025	Delivered MFSC materials to Mendocino PBS 6/19/2025. Emailed other cities 6/20/2025 - Ft. Bragg and Willits are on board to have materials in the PBS/Community Development Depts as well. Emailed MFSC 6/21/2025 to arrange to have materials delivered. Emailed CalFire 6/23/2025 inquiring about CalFire materials.	In-process - distribute home hardening best practices materials from MFSC to planning & building offices of local jurisdictions	Gather and/or create content that is available in easy to consume media format, ex video shorts, one page pdfs, with relevant information. Increase awareness of general population focusing on homeowners, contractors to recommendations for home hardening practices. Work collaboratively with PRRM for creation of materials.
July 17th 2025	Agriculture	Regional interest in/need for meat processing facility (Redwood Region RISE has funded feasibility study in Del Norte, still far for local producers)	Explore feasibility of animal processing facility with regional partners and neighboring Counties. Research grant opportunities to fund.	Economic Development Division	Lead	Winter 2026	Discussed with Lake County and Sonoma County EDC staff to assess neighboring counties needs.	In process - discussed with both Sonoma County and Lake County staff. Reviewing feasibility study	Small scale, humane meat processing facility within 2 hours of most locations in Mendocino County
July 17th 2025	Agriculture	Place-based marketing/cooperative branding and/or cooperative distribution	Facilitate establishing a committee/group that will develop county-wide branding, or infuse "Love Local Mendo" buy local campaign	Economic Development Division	Lead - then hand off	Winter 2026	Facilitated meeting with stakeholders (RRRISE Tourism Sector, Visit Ukiah, MPG, MCA, MWGA) 6/10 and 8/18. Looking for grant opportunities to support development of brand identity or for infusion into Love Local Mendo	In process - met with local agencies, Visit Ukiah, RRRISE Arts & Tourism Sector Lead, Mendocino Wine Growers, Mendocino Cannabis Alliance, Mendocino Producers Guild to discuss collaborative marketing efforts	Mendocino County place-based marketing and cooperative branding - create platform for small local businesses
July 17th 2025	Agriculture	Basic local support services/businesses - ex: closest scale repair is Santa Rosa	Survey local farmers (and retired farmers) as to missing support services, relay information to local SBDC, chambers and other agencies to share with local entrepreneurs as potential new business or additional services	Economic Development Division, County of Mendocino Agriculture Department	Co-lead	Spring 2026	Drafting survey to agricultural businesses, will send to Agriculture Department for review prior to publishing	In progress - collaborate with Ag Dept, SBDC, EDFC to distribute survey, then develop and distribute information for needed services	Create report for local SBDC, EDC and local educational instutions to reference to help support start-ups or current small businesses in providing needed services

July 17th 2025	Agriculture	Safety trainings that are affordable and on-site or local and bilingual in pesticides (DPR), heat (Cal OSHA), FSMA, sexual harassment	Work with Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (WANB), Mendocino Wine Growers Association (MWGA)	WANB, Farm Bureau (MCFB), Mendocino Wine Growers Association (MWGA)	Participant/watch	Spring 2026	WANB has resources to pay for on-site and/or bilingual trainer for different required safety trainings	In progress - WANB, MCFB and MWGA are coordinating programs	Create accessible, onsite and bilingual training opportunities for local businesses and employees
July 17th 2025	Agriculture	Support from County Agriculture Department to take stance on state regulations, voice support/back Farm Bureau or other agencies, brings validity to voices	Legislative platform - additions, edits for continued support of farmers at state and federal level, or set up channels for communication between Farm Bureau and Agriculture Department	TBD - Farm Bureau, Wine Growers Association, Mendocino County Farm Bureau, Good Farm Fund	Participant/watch	Sep-26	Work with Ag Dept to include language in Legislative Platform to support farmers at state and federal level	Updates to Legislative Platform due end of September	Support lines of communication between the Farm Bureau, Wine Growers Association, Agriculture Dept, BOS, via Legislative Platform
July 17th 2025	Agriculture	Farm innovation and knowledge sharing, ex: closed loop system for recycling farm waste using worms, cuts cost/creates additional product	Facilitate or coordinate educational opportunities for farmers to learn cost saving or effective ways to develop additional cashflow streams	TBD - Mendocino Wine Growers Association, UCANR, Farm Bureau, Good Farm Fund	Lead	Spring /Summer 2026	ED Division received CDBG PI grant, program manual going to BOS for approval 9/9. These funds could potentially be used to create workshops or trainings.	ED staff exploring using current grant funding to offer workshops on innovative and cost effective agricultural practices	Develop Classes or Workshops for information sharing on agriculture practices to cut expenses or create new revenue streams