



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS LOCAL WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

A new report commissioned by the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board shows that Santa Cruz County remains a net exporter of workforce talent, with additional challenges in the areas of job quality and geographic disparities.

Produced by BW Research Partnership on behalf of the Workforce Development Board, the report shows roughly 25,000 resident workers leave the County every day, commuting out of county for employment. While the County has added 6,300 jobs since 2007, the strongest growth has been in low-skill, low-wage jobs with an average annual salary of \$25,000 – below the living wage needed to sustain families. The County and Workforce Development Board will use the report to operationalize the [County's Strategic Plan](#), which includes goals of creating opportunities to develop a quality workforce and increasing family-wage jobs.

Furthermore, job growth in South County is lower than the rest of the county and unemployment is higher. South County also has lower educational attainment and household incomes, and is disproportionately impacted by local housing costs.

"This report highlights some of the challenges posed by the labor market here in Santa Cruz County," Workforce Development Board Director Andy Stone said. "Local workers are forced to look elsewhere for opportunity and work harder to make ends meet. Fortunately, there are steps we as a community can take to meet these challenges."

The report calls for engaging stakeholders to build an education network to tap underutilized potential, support local job creation by attracting new businesses, and better understand the challenges faced by Santa Cruz County residents, which have led to high turnover and low retention rates.

"Our long-term economic vitality is dependent on providing our workforce with the skills, tools and opportunities to be successful, as we seek to enhance the job market and business sector for the benefit of all county residents," Santa Cruz County Economic Development Director Andy Constable said.

Several industry clusters have shown strong growth in Santa Cruz County and could provide career pathways for more local residents if developed further: Information and Communications Technologies; Finance and Banking, Insurance, and Real Estate; Healthcare; and Biotechnology and Biomedical Devices.