

UPDATES ON SLO COUNTY ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The EVC champions continue to make progress in implementing and achieving the goals of the county-wide Economic Strategy. Significant progress has been made through their collective expertise and hard work coupled with tireless passion for our local communities.

Collaboration with the County of San Luis Obispo

The six business clusters represented by the strategy support an on-going collaboration between the EVC and the County of San Luis Obispo. Among the objectives of the clusters are to address the challenges of business facility expansion by incorporating the analysis of the economic impacts (jobs, taxes, etc.) for consideration in project approvals and policy making decisions by the County.

The EVC staff and Board of Directors, with the support of the County Board of Supervisors, initiated discussions with County staff on how economic impacts should be woven into the county's land use decision making processes.

Through months of collaboration and with input from the industry cluster members, an economic analysis framework involving an outline data input interface as well as an economic modeling tool (made available by the Workforce Investment Board of SLO County) has been developed for consideration by the County Board of Supervisors for adoption and testing. This on-line tool will allow businesses to voluntarily determine and then submit to the County, economic data and other beneficial impacts of discretionary projects, as well as enable industries to provide input into how policies might impact our local economy. This also will provide a method to evaluate how such projects and policies support the Economic Strategy.

Proponents with business expansion projects that require a discretionary permit from the County and that meet minimum established criteria may work with the EVC to complete an outline questionnaire and possibly an economic modeling report. Basic information provided by an applicant using a short list of economic indicators (number of jobs created, annual revenue, increase in assessed property value, construction cost, etc.) results in a brief economic impact analysis report to help inform land use decisions. This process for providing more and better information to county staff and businesses will help facilitate completion of a new section in County Staff Reports likely entitled "Business Impact Statement". A brief summary prepared by County staff will capture the project's economic impact and may also be a first step to identifying potential projects that are eligible for the County's new "Business Assistance Team" -- another benefit stemming from the economic strategy project.

The stakeholders continue to refine and test these tools for completion in the coming months.

Another win --- Collaboration with Cal Poly and Cuesta College

As a business owner, are you aware of the internship opportunities available at Cal Poly or Cuesta College? If you had a position open that would benefit a young professional who is potentially a future employee, would you know how to go about finding that individual? Would the student know how to find you or other similar opportunities?

The Knowledge and Innovation cluster members want to better connect businesses and interns. The cluster issued an on-line survey to local businesses asking them about their current and potential future participation in such programs and whether a job fair exclusively for local employers would also be of interest. The results of the survey confirmed these needs.

The cluster is collaborating with Cal Poly and Cuesta College to deliver tools which help business owners engage and understand the process for securing an intern and publishing local employment or internship opportunities. A Local Employer's Job Fair is being coordinated by both institutions, jointly marketed, with a focus on improved engagement between the business community and prospective employees and interns.

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

Henry Ford

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