



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATIVE

## COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2025

The Economic Development Collaborative hosts the Small Business Development Center and is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the California Office of the Small Business Advocate and by the Workforce Development Board of Ventura County.



# EDC COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2025

As we reflect on 2025 and look ahead to 2026, we are reminded once again that our region's progress is rooted in collaboration. This past year demonstrated how deeply our partnerships shape Ventura County's economic resilience and shared prosperity.

Across our programs, we observed significant improvements. Through our partnership with Accelerator California, six entrepreneurs secured state funding with the support of our SBDC team. Our Ready • Set • Grow workshop series, hosted by the cities of Oxnard and Ventura, served 90 local entrepreneurs with tools to grow and compete. International trade efforts expanded with the introduction of multilingual curricula, AI-driven learning tools, and hands-on mentoring, supporting over 200 participants. And through our digital skills replication toolkits, communities across the state are joining a growing movement to close the digital divide.

Regionally, our work with Uplift Central Coast advanced new investments in economic resilience, workforce opportunity and innovation across six counties. At the same time, the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast helped deliver major progress in middle-mile construction, local fiber expansion and digital inclusion efforts throughout the region.

The past year was also distinguished by the extraordinary growth of Ventura County's film ecosystem. Through the Ventura County Film Commission, we continued to build a coordinated, film-ready ecosystem that showcases our region's unique dual-zone advantage, one of California's rare locations that lies both within and outside the Los Angeles 30-Mile Studio Zone. This distinction, enhanced by the collaborative permitting exercised by our public agency partners, engaged community partners, local workforce and industry-ready vendors, has strengthened Ventura County's role as a premier destination for production. Film has generated tens of millions in economic activity, supported thousands of jobs, and deepened the region's creative and cultural identity. Most importantly, our regional commitment to collaboration makes our ecosystem more aligned, resilient, and optimized for the opportunities ahead.

As we close the year, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our partners, collaborating jurisdictions, community organizations and state agencies whose support makes this work possible. To our Board of Directors, we extend our deepest appreciation for your unwavering leadership and commitment to our mission.

With optimism for 2026 and gratitude for the work we share, we look forward to continuing this journey together, assuring inclusive, innovative and broadly shared economic prosperity across our region.



Bruce Stenslie  
EDC President/CEO

## EDC LOAN

Continued to manage loan capital from the City of Camarillo, City of Oxnard, City of Simi Valley, City of Ventura, First 5 Ventura County, Mechanics Bank and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Managed contributions to loan loss reserves and support for our lending capacity and portfolio servicing from California Bank and Trust, California Bank of Commerce and First Citizens Bank.

Secured loan loss guarantees of up to 80% and collateral support through strategic partnerships with the GO-Biz Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank and the California State Treasurer's Office – California Capital Access Program.

A special thank you to Corrine McLaurin Grewal from California Bank of Commerce; we truly appreciate your continued support over the years.

### EDC LOAN 2025 IMPACT

**\$2,769,070**  
Available Loan Capital

**\$2,553,620**  
Loaned



Left to right: Los Angeles Regional SBDC Executive Director Pat Nye, CalOSBA Acting Director/Deputy Director Clair Whitmer and EDC SBDC Director Dr. Ray Bowman.

## EDC SBDC 2025 IMPACT

**1,862**  
Clients Served

**11,789.61**  
Hours of Consulting

**61**  
Start-Ups

**320**  
Jobs Created

**8934**  
Jobs Supported

**Over \$33M**  
In Capital Infusion

## COLLABORATION WITH ENTREPRENEURS BRINGS STATE FUNDING SUCCESS

The EDC Small Business Development Center (SBDC) proudly celebrates its collaboration with six innovative entrepreneurs who were awarded funding through the Accelerator California program, administered by GO-Biz. By working closely on pitch decks, recommendations and application support, these companies secured a total of \$500,000 in funding. This investment provides crucial resources for research, development and business expansion, showcasing the impact of strong partnerships between local business support, entrepreneurs and the State.

### Ready • Set • Grow: Small Business Success Workshop Series

The EDC SBDC launched the **Ready • Set • Grow: Small Business Success Workshop Series**, developed and led by **Luisa Arzate** and cohosted by **Juliana Ramírez**, in collaboration with the **cities of Oxnard and Ventura and with the support of EDC SBDC Client Engagement Advisor Brenda Mayorga**. Through this series, EDC SBDC had the privilege of working with **90 local entrepreneurs**, providing them with valuable guidance, resources and strategies to help them grow and succeed.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the City of Oxnard, Mayor Luis A. McArthur, and Jasmine McGuinty for hosting us with warmth and creating such a welcoming environment for our participants. We also thank the City of Ventura, Cary Glenn, Meredith Hart and Cailin Garcia for their support in making the workshops accessible and engaging for entrepreneurs.

This series highlights the collaborative efforts between local cities and the SBDC, showcasing our ongoing commitment to fostering entrepreneurship, building business capacity and contributing to the economic growth of Ventura County.

# EDC SUCCESS STORY - PURRLANDIA



Kat Killoran - Founder & Ceo

to invest in and open my business, create jobs and make a real impact in the community. Purrrlandia has been such a success that I'm already thinking about expanding to additional locations to continue this work." Through her efforts, Kat was able to create nine jobs in the community, providing meaningful work while supporting the local economy.

**INDUSTRY:** Accommodation and Food Services

**LOCATION:** Ventura County

**FOUNDED:** 2025

## BACKGROUND

Creating a safe and engaging space for adoptable rescue cats is no small task, especially when balancing animal welfare, education, and business operations. Kat Killoran, Founder & CEO of Purrrlandia, saw firsthand the challenges faced by local shelters: shy or fearful cats often went unnoticed, well-intentioned adopters lacked guidance, and limited space sometimes put adoptable cats at risk.

Kat's vision was inspired by her volunteer work at animal shelters and her travels to Japan's cat cafes. She envisioned a sanctuary where rescue cats could roam freely, exhibit their natural behaviors, and form meaningful bonds with visitors, helping them find loving homes while educating the community on responsible cat care.

Knowing she wanted to launch Purrrlandia responsibly, Kat turned to the EDC SBDC. With guidance from the SBDC team, especially from her EDC SBDC business advisor, Wangari Njathi, she accessed personalized advising, business workshops and connections to funding resources. Our team's support helped her refine her business model, secure investment, and launch successfully.

## EDC IMPACT

Reflecting on her experience, Kat shared, "The EDC SBDC team was incredible from start to finish. Wangari's guidance was particularly invaluable—her advice, support and encouragement gave me confidence in every step of the process. Thanks to the SBDC, I had the opportunity

*"The EDC SBDC team was incredible from start to finish. Wangari's guidance was particularly invaluable—her advice, support and encouragement gave me confidence in every step of the process. Thanks to the SBDC, I had the opportunity to invest in and open my business, create jobs and make a real impact in the community."* - Kat Killoran

## EDC GO GLOBAL TRADE PROGRAM

### Export Training Grant Program (GO-Biz)

The EDC Go Global Trade Program, an extension of the EDC Small Business Development Center, collaborated with Go-Biz to facilitate the Export Training Grant Program. With \$127,000 in Go-Biz funding, under the leadership of Dr. Ray Bowman and guided by EDC SBDC International Trade Advisor Simona Filip Racek, the EDC SBDC launched enhanced, multilingual export training curricula and integrated AI-powered learning tools, supporting over 100 businesses and equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to succeed in global markets.

### Mastering Export Strategy Preparation Course

As part of its expanded offerings, the EDC SBDC delivered a Mastering Export Strategy Preparation Course through the Go Global Trade Program, providing a six-week flagship program totaling 18 hours of coursework. The program featured AI-assisted simulations and weekly guidance from Certified Global Business Professionals. The Mastering Export Strategy Preparation Course has graduated 46 businesses and 65 individuals, with the program continuing indefinitely. For more information on the Mastering Export Strategy Preparation Course, visit <https://edcollaborative.com/edc-ggtp/>.



Left to right: EDC Director of Strategic Relations Alondra Gaytán, Consul General of Romania in Los Angeles Honorable Lucia Sava and EDC SBDC International Trade Advisor Simona Filip Racek, CGBP.

### EDC GGTP 2025 IMPACT

**326**  
Clients Served

**94**  
Grants Secured for  
Expansion into  
International Markets

**~\$5.03M**  
In Capital Accessed

### Workshops and Webinars

EDC SBDC hosted a series of workshops and webinars that provided comprehensive training on Export Compliance, International Pricing Strategies, USMCA trade updates and digital trade readiness. These sessions ensured that participating businesses had both practical knowledge and strategic insight to compete successfully on the global stage.

### GGTP Goes International

EDC SBDC International Trade Advisor Simona Filip Racek, CGBP, was interviewed by Lebensmittel Zeitung, the leading German business publication specializing in the retail and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods industries, for their 2025 North America Report. This publication is also part of the Deutscher Fachverlag Media Group, one of Europe's largest specialist media companies. The interview was about exporting to the European Union. You can download the article in German here: <https://www.lzmedien.net/forms/regional-report-north-america-download>



## EDC FILM 2025 IMPACT

773  
Permits

1,486  
Film Days

\$26,153,600  
In Economic Impact

Left to right: Upstate California Film Commission Regional Film Commissioner Sabrina Jurisich, California Film Commission Deputy Director Yetee Osunsanmi and EDC Film Commission Liaison and FLICS President Bill Bartels.

For over a century, Ventura County has been one of California's most versatile and enduring production landscapes. Today, the Economic Development Collaborative serves as the Ventura County Film Commission (VCFC), guiding the region's evolution into a fully film-ready ecosystem that blends economic strength, community partnership, workforce opportunities and production convenience in a way no other California county can match.

### Community at the Center

At the heart of this evolution is the community sphere: a living system of cities, the County, residents, vendors, unions and workforce partners who participate directly in the success of film and media production.

**Production is not an external guest; it is part of the region's infrastructure.**

**VCFC strengthens this architecture by:**

- Convening productions with local crew and businesses
- Translating technical language for regulators
- Uniting permitting agencies
- Monitoring production trends to ensure the region is coordinated and responsive

## A Unique Geographic Advantage

Ventura County is one of the only regions that lies both inside and outside the Los Angeles 30-Mile Studio Zone, offering productions a rare dual benefit:

### In-Zone Convenience

- Reduced travel and per diem costs
- Simplified union logistics
- Easy access to LA-based crews

### Out-of-Zone Incentives

- Eligibility for uplifts under the California Film and Television Tax Credit Program, including rural/ site-specific bonuses and local hire incentives

This dual-zone identity enables Ventura County to support fast-paced television units, rural set pieces, commercial shoots, and incentive-driven features while maximizing community benefits.

## Economic & Cultural Impact

Production tourism delivers both cultural visibility and economic value.

### VCFC data shows that filming has:

- Generated over \$90M in economic impact during peak years
- Supported 4,873 film days
- Processed more than 1,500 annual permits

Local production activity creates two additional jobs for every film job, benefiting over 3,500 union, guild and trade workers who reside in Ventura County.

## Resilience Through Cycles

Production does not arrive once; it returns in cycles. Ventura County has demonstrated resilience through major disruptions, including the 2020 pandemic and the 2023 writers' and actors' strikes, followed by strong recovery years that strengthened vendor readiness, cross-jurisdictional consistency and workforce capacity.

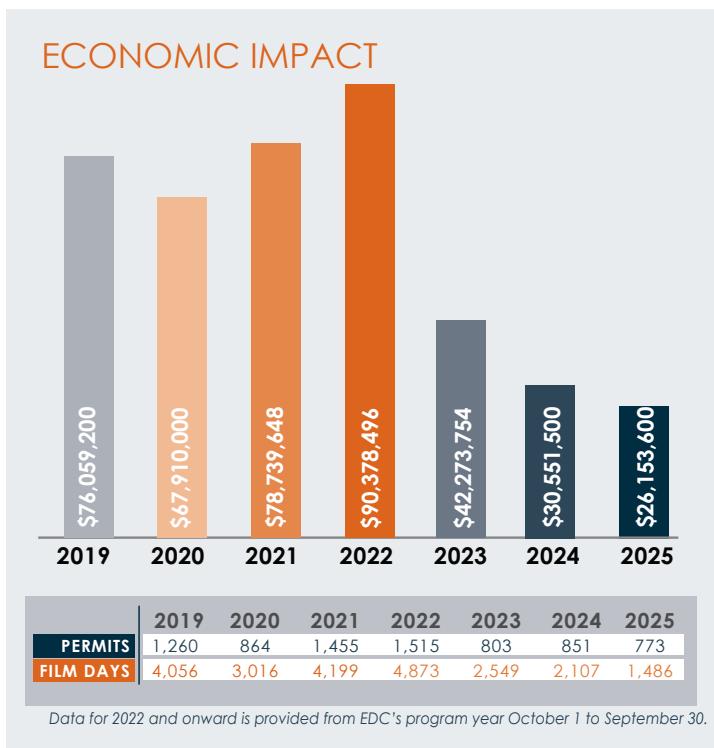
Each production "iteration" makes the system faster, clearer and more relationally aligned.

## Why Production Tourism Matters

With VCFC as a single front door, Ventura County is not simply film-friendly; it is strategically positioned, economically resilient and uniquely advantaged.

This is why communities desire production tourism. It generates long-term economic activity, expands local hiring, strengthens infrastructure, enhances cultural visibility, and fosters deeper regional collaboration. And with VCFC acting as a single front door, Ventura County is not simply film-friendly; it is strategically positioned, economically resilient, and uniquely advantaged.

Ventura County is a place where productions return, where state incentives are accessible from multiple angles, and where community and creativity rise together. From the country to the coast, from in-zone to out-of-zone, Ventura County is California's dual-zone engine of film, a region where the lights go off for filming so the future can turn on.



## VENTURA COUNTY DIGITAL UPSKILLING TRAINING PROGRAM IMPACT

**Since 2023, EDC has deployed funds made available by Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin to provide digital upskilling training, aiming to help close the digital divide and ensure that workers and businesses have the necessary skills to compete in the digital world.**

TRAINING	2025	TOTAL TO DATE
Computer Basics	<b>564</b> Trained	<b>1004</b> Trained
Information & Communications Technologies	<b>64</b> Completed AWS Certification & <b>124</b> Completed CompTIA Training	<b>188</b> Trained
Get Your Small Business Online	<b>89</b> Trained	<b>170</b> Trained

As a part of the program's commitment to expanding the pilot's reach, the EDC team, in partnership with the Ventura County Office of Education and Women's Economic Ventures, has developed replication tool kits for both the Computer Basics Course and the Get Your Small Business Online Course. The toolkits include the entire course curriculum in both English and Spanish, ready-to-use slides, presentation notes, student worksheets, instructor guides, program evaluation tools and administration tips. As of year to date, **176 have downloaded the Computer Basics Toolkit**, and **60 have downloaded the Get Your Small Business Online Toolkit**. Moorpark Adult School became the first to replicate the Get Your Small Business Online program.



EDC is calling on community organizations, schools, libraries, nonprofits, workforce development boards and others across the state and beyond to utilize the NO-COST replication toolkits and join the movement to close the digital skills gap.

### COMPUTER BASICS TOOLKIT

[www.bit.ly/edc-computerbasics](http://www.bit.ly/edc-computerbasics)

### GET YOUR SMALL BUSINESS ONLINE TOOLKIT

[www.bit.ly/edc-getbizonline](http://www.bit.ly/edc-getbizonline)

"Thank you for the great opportunity to learn how to use a computer. Not only did it help me to be able to help my daughter, but now I can make my payments online. I can look for the information I need. The most important thing is that I will get a better position in my job, and that's great. Thank you very much." – Itzel H., Computer Basics Student

# EDC SUCCESS STORY – NEREID BIOMATERIALS, INC

## BACKGROUND

Nereid Biomaterials, Inc. is an innovative biotechnology company dedicated to developing sustainable, seaweed-based biomaterials that promote environmental stewardship and scalable industrial solutions. Founded with a mission to address global sustainability challenges, the company operates at the intersection of science, climate impact and economic development.

## EDC IMPACT

Alyson Santoro and Madison Cohen engaged with the Economic Development Collaborative Small Business Development Center (EDC SBDC) to refine their business strategy and explore funding opportunities that align with their research and development objectives. As part of this engagement, Nereid Biomaterials participated in the Accelerator Grant Program, seeking state-level funding supported by the Governor's Office. With technical assistance and guidance from the EDC SBDC, Nereid Biomaterials successfully secured grant funding, which was allocated directly to advancing research and development through laboratory work. This milestone significantly enhanced the company's ability to scale innovation and advance its scientific mission. Nereid Biomaterials is currently collaborating with the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB),

*Their success highlights the impact of targeted technical assistance, strategic funding and collaborative ecosystems in fostering innovation and sustainable economic growth.*

strengthening its academic and research foundation. The company has worked closely with EDC SBDC business advisors Brendon Kaiser, Elizabeth Cabral and Erin Fredregill, who provided support in strategic planning, funding navigation and overall business development. The company also participated in the Navy Lab FATHOMWERX Summit, where the team engaged in high-level networking and collaboration through the County of Ventura, California. This experience expanded their visibility among defense, innovation, and technology stakeholders. With continued support from the EDC SBDC and its partners, Nereid Biomaterials is advancing cutting-edge research while building a scalable, mission-driven business. Their success highlights the impact of targeted technical assistance, strategic funding and collaborative ecosystems in fostering innovation and sustainable economic growth.

**INDUSTRY:** Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

**LOCATION:** Santa Barbara County

**FOUNDED:** 2025



Left to right: Nereid Biomaterials Co-Founder Alyson Santoro and Nereid Biomaterials Research Associate II Madison Cohen.

# EDC INITIATIVES

## UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST

### Catalyst Funding to Drive Regional Growth

In February, Uplift granted \$9 million in CA Jobs First Catalyst Predevelopment Funding to 42 organizations advancing economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and equitable growth across all six Central Coast counties. These organizations span industries such as workforce development, aerospace, education and job training, child care, community development, climate resilience, and sustainable agriculture. The funding supports early-stage project development aimed at driving long-term economic growth for the region.

### Shaping California's Economic Future

Uplift contributed to the new California Jobs First Economic Blueprint, a statewide plan shaped by 13 regional plans—Uplift's among them—to promote sustainable economic growth, innovation, and access to good-paying jobs over the next decade. Governor Newsom announced that the Blueprint is paired with \$125 million in funding to support new, ready-to-go projects.

### Investing in Aerospace and Defense Innovation

As part of California Jobs First and Governor Newsom's Regional Investment Initiative, the Central Coast was awarded \$16.95 million to strengthen the aerospace and defense sector. Led by REACH and MBEP, this investment represents a transformative opportunity to expand innovation, create workforce opportunities, and support economic growth across the region, positioning the Central Coast at the forefront of California's emerging aerospace initiatives.

### Building Workforce Pathways for Students

In collaboration with the Central Coast K-16 Collaborative, led regionally by UC Santa Cruz's Educational Partnership Center (EPC), the K-16 Collaborative is investing nearly \$500,000 to fund 100 paid internships and apprenticeships connected to eight Catalyst-funded initiatives. These opportunities will provide hands-on experience in growing fields, support students' transitions from high school to college, and prepare them for high-wage, high-impact careers while strengthening the region's future workforce pipeline.

**Stay up-to-date with Uplift's work at [www.upliftcentralcoast.org](http://www.upliftcentralcoast.org)**

Uplift Central Coast (Uplift) is a six-county coalition working together toward a shared vision of a diverse, inclusive economy built by and for the region's residents. Uplift is convened by REACH San Luis Obispo, EDC and the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP).

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

EDC is a regional leader in childcare-related entrepreneurship, regularly partnering with Child Development Resources, First 5 Ventura County and the Ventura County Office of Education to support the next generation's education and career success.





Left to right: BCPC Collaborative Communications Consultant Nadine Adam, BCPC Collaborative Developer, Ventura County Molika Oum, BCPC Collaborative Coordinator, Santa Barbara County Shelby Arthur, EDC President and CEO Bruce Stenslie, BCPC Project Manager, REACH San Luis Obispo County Michael Foote and BCPC Data & Mapping Expert Tim Tierney.

## BROADBAND CONSORTIUM OF THE PACIFIC COAST

2025 marked a year of significant broadband progress across the Central Coast. Middle-mile construction advanced in all three counties, new local fiber builds expanded service to rural neighborhoods and business districts and digital inclusion efforts strengthened workforce readiness and community access. Throughout the year, BCPC worked closely to coordinate planning, share data and improve regional alignment. BCPC collaborated with cities, counties, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) libraries, and community organizations to align priorities, share data, and support coordinated broadband planning efforts. These partnerships enhanced communication across jurisdictions and strengthened the regional capacity needed to advance digital equity and future last-mile connectivity.

The Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC) is an initiative of EDC, advocating for the deployment and adoption of broadband in Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties.

### Statewide Middle-Mile Progress in the BCPC Region

The Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI) made significant advances across the Tri-County region in 2025, with major construction milestones in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. These routes will serve as a critical backbone infrastructure enabling future last-mile expansion and improved resiliency for communities across the Central Coast.

### Local Fiber Expansion and Resiliency

The region advanced fiber deployment and network resiliency through collaboration among BCPC, cities, ISPs, and county partners. New fiber installation began in Paso Robles to expand high-speed service to rural neighborhoods, agricultural operations, and small businesses, bringing new competitive options to northern San Luis Obispo County. In Santa Barbara County, design and environmental review work was completed for fiber projects across nine underserved communities, positioning the area for future expansion once funding becomes available. Ventura County made major gains with Simi Valley's FiberCity® 98% completion with more than 3 million feet of fiber installed, while Moorpark connected its first fiber-to-the-home customer, offering speeds up to 5 Gbps for residents and 10 Gbps for businesses, including affordable plans for low-income households, marking a major step toward multi-gigabit competition in the county.

To learn more about BCPC's activities, visit <https://pcbroadband.org/>



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