

N B E C

NORTH BAY EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION



WORKFORCE INNOVATION
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

REGIONAL PLAN

Program Years 2021-2024

A. Analytical Overview of the Region

- *Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data.*
- *Provide an analysis of the current educational and skill levels of the workforce, the current needs of employers in the region, and any relevant skill gaps between the two.*
- *Provide an analysis of industries and occupations with an emerging demand.*

Population Overview

The North Bay Regional Planning Unit (RPU) is comprised of the counties of Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano and Sonoma. Within the RPU, the Workforce Alliance of the North Bay is a Joint Powers Agency representing four counties (Marin, Napa, Lake, and Mendocino) under one Workforce Development Board. Each of the other member counties operates its own Workforce Development Board. The North Bay RPU is also commonly referred to as NBEC, or the North Bay Employment Connection, and has been collaborating regionally since 2000. “North Bay RPU” and “NBEC” are used interchangeably throughout this plan.

The geographic spread of the RPU is vast, covering 9,498 square miles and stretching from Marin County just north of the Golden Gate Bridge northward over 180 miles through Sonoma and Mendocino Counties on the Pacific Coast, and through Solano, Napa, and Lake Counties on the eastern border of the RPU. These six counties are home to 1.49 million people and a labor force of over 723,000.

Demographics

There is significant variance in the demographics of each of the NBEC counties. The rural areas of the region experience greater poverty and lower median household incomes. Lake County has the highest percentage of its population living below the federal poverty line, at 18.9%, as well as the lowest median income at \$47,040. Marin County has the lowest percentage of its population living in poverty at 6.7%, and the highest median income at \$115,246.

County	Population	Median household income	% below poverty
Lake	64,386	\$47,040	18.9%
Marin	258,826	\$115,246	6.7%
Mendocino	86,749	\$51,416	13.2%
Napa	137,744	\$88,596	6.8%
Solano	447,643	\$81,472	8.9%
Sonoma	494,336	\$81,018	6.8%
TOTAL	1,489,684		

SOURCE: 2019 America Community Survey

Not unexpectedly, the educational attainment rates of the population vary by county. Overall, the region has a lower percentage of high school non-completers than the state average. Across the region, approximately 132,000 have less than a high school degree. Lake has the highest percentage of the population with a high school diploma or less at 45.7%, followed closely by

Mendocino with 40.4%, compared to the state overall at 36.6%. Within the region, Marin’s population has the highest percentage with a baccalaureate degree or higher at 58%, followed by Sonoma at 34.1%, compared to the state average of 35%. This highly skilled workforce is part of the Bay Area regional economy, but high housing costs and long commutes are major challenges to the workforce and economic development, issues identified in multiple stakeholder sessions. The long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote work trends remains to be seen.

	Less than HS degree	HS graduate	Some college	AA degree	BA or higher
California	16.0%	20.6%	20.6%	7.9%	35.0%
Lake	15.2%	30.5%	28.1%	10.5%	15.7%
Marin	7.3%	11.0%	17.1%	6.6%	58.0%
Mendocino	14.8%	25.6%	28.0%	8.2%	23.3%
Napa	16.4%	18.6%	21.9%	9.6%	33.4%
Solano	12.4%	23.7%	28.1%	9.9%	25.8%
Sonoma	12.9%	19.3%	24.5%	9.2%	34.1%

SOURCE: EMSI, 2019 ACS

Within the RPU, approximately 155,045 individuals speak English less than very well, and 267,193 individuals were born outside of the United States. The region overall has lower percentages of limited English-speaking individuals than the state figure of 18.1%. Napa County has the highest percentage in the region who speak English “less than very well,” at 15.8% and Solano has the highest foreign-born population in the region at 87,792 individuals. Spanish is the most commonly spoken language in the region’s LEP households.

County	Individuals that speak English less than “very well”	Percentage of LEP individuals	Foreign Born Population	Spanish	Asian and PI languages
Lake	3,875	6.4%	5,682	5.9%	0.3%
Marin	22,213	9.0%	47,989	6.0%	1.4%
Mendocino	7,679	9.3%	11,322	8.7%	0.4%
Napa	21,084	15.8%	31,469	13.2%	1.9%
Solano	46,741	11.3%	87,792	6.5%	4.0%
Sonoma	53,453	11.2%	82,939	9.3%	1.2%
TOTAL	155,045	11%	267,193		

SOURCE: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Table DP02

Commute Patterns

Housing and transportation infrastructure play an important role in how integrated the regional workforce can be. For example, Sonoma, Marin, Solano, and Napa Counties are all relatively well-connected by various freeways and highways. Mendocino and Lake Counties are more

challenged in terms of access to major labor markets and employers, outside of government or retail, due to distance.

Housing and transportation naturally link labor markets between county economies. People travel between the core counties on a daily basis; Mendocino and Lake Counties have more outflow of workers than inflow, much like any other rural areas that are adjacent to more populated areas. If rent is less expensive in the North Bay, and jobs pay more in the core Bay Area, people will commute. The long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on remote working and whether commute patterns will shift in a meaningful way remain to be seen.

The majority (76.6%) of workers across counties work within their county of residence, with larger majorities in Lake, Mendocino and Sonoma. Higher out-county movement can be observed in Solano and Marin, with an overall regional commute time of 28 minutes.

Commute Patterns, Workers over 16

County	Percent who work in their county of residence	Average Commute Time (minutes)
Lake	85.8%	24.8
Marin	67.0%	33.5
Mendocino	89.6%	22.8
Napa	75.8%	26.9
Solano	55.9%	34.7
Sonoma	85.5%	26.1
Regional Average	76.6%	28.1

SOURCE: 2019 American Community Survey

Labor Force Overview

Given the large size of the RPU, the demographic profile of the labor force as well as the local economy varies significantly throughout the region. Sonoma is the most populous county with 495,026 residents and 250,949 in the labor force, and Lake County is the least populous county, with 64,495 residents and 28,638 in the labor force.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate in September 2020 ranged from a high of 9.7% in Solano to a low of 7% in Marin. The following table summarizes numbers employed and unemployed, as well as the unemployment rate in each county.

County	# in labor force	# employed	# unemployed	% unemployed
Lake	28,638	26,104	2,534	8.8%
Marin	132,434	123,164	9,270	7.0%
Mendocino	36,844	33,615	3,229	8.8%
Napa	71,584	65,641	5,943	8.3%
Solano	202,625	182,898	19,727	9.7%
Sonoma	250,949	232,819	18,130	7.2%
TOTAL	723,074	664,241	58,833	8.3%

SOURCE: EMSI

The following table shows the unemployment rate trends for the region as a whole from 2015 through September 2020.

Unemployment Rate Trends

Your areas had a September 2020 unemployment rate of 7.94%, increasing from 4.97% 5 years before.



SOURCE: EMSI

Similar to the rest of the Bay Area, the North Bay has experienced a decrease in the labor force participation rate during the COVID-19 pandemic. A report by the Bay Area Council found that the pandemic has had a regressive impact on female labor force participation, in part because women are disproportionately represented in the industries expected to be negatively impacted by COVID-19.¹ Furthermore, mothers have taken on more of the burden of caring for children who are not able to physically attend school during the pandemic because of state and local health orders or because of personal health risk factors. The following table illustrates the labor force participation rate from 2015-2020 for the North Bay region.

¹ <http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/report/economic-profile-2020-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-regional-labor-force/>

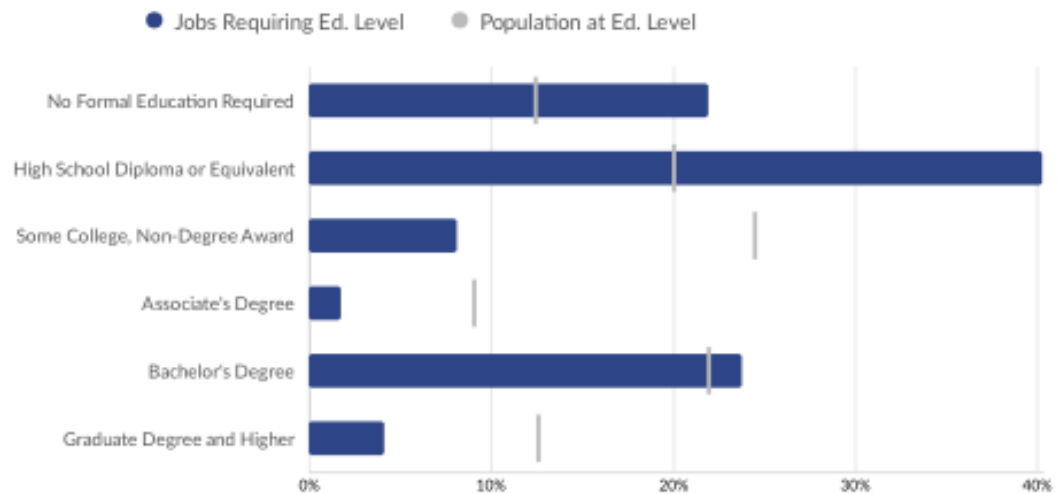
Labor Force Participation Rate Trends



SOURCE: EMSI

An examination of EMSI data allows for a comparison of the required educational level for available jobs to the education level of the population overall. An analysis for the North Bay finds that there are a greater number of jobs requiring minimal education (a high school diploma or less), compared to the education level of the labor force – in other words, more low skilled jobs than workers - and there are more people with some higher education (some college, associate's degrees, and graduate degrees or higher) than jobs that require them.

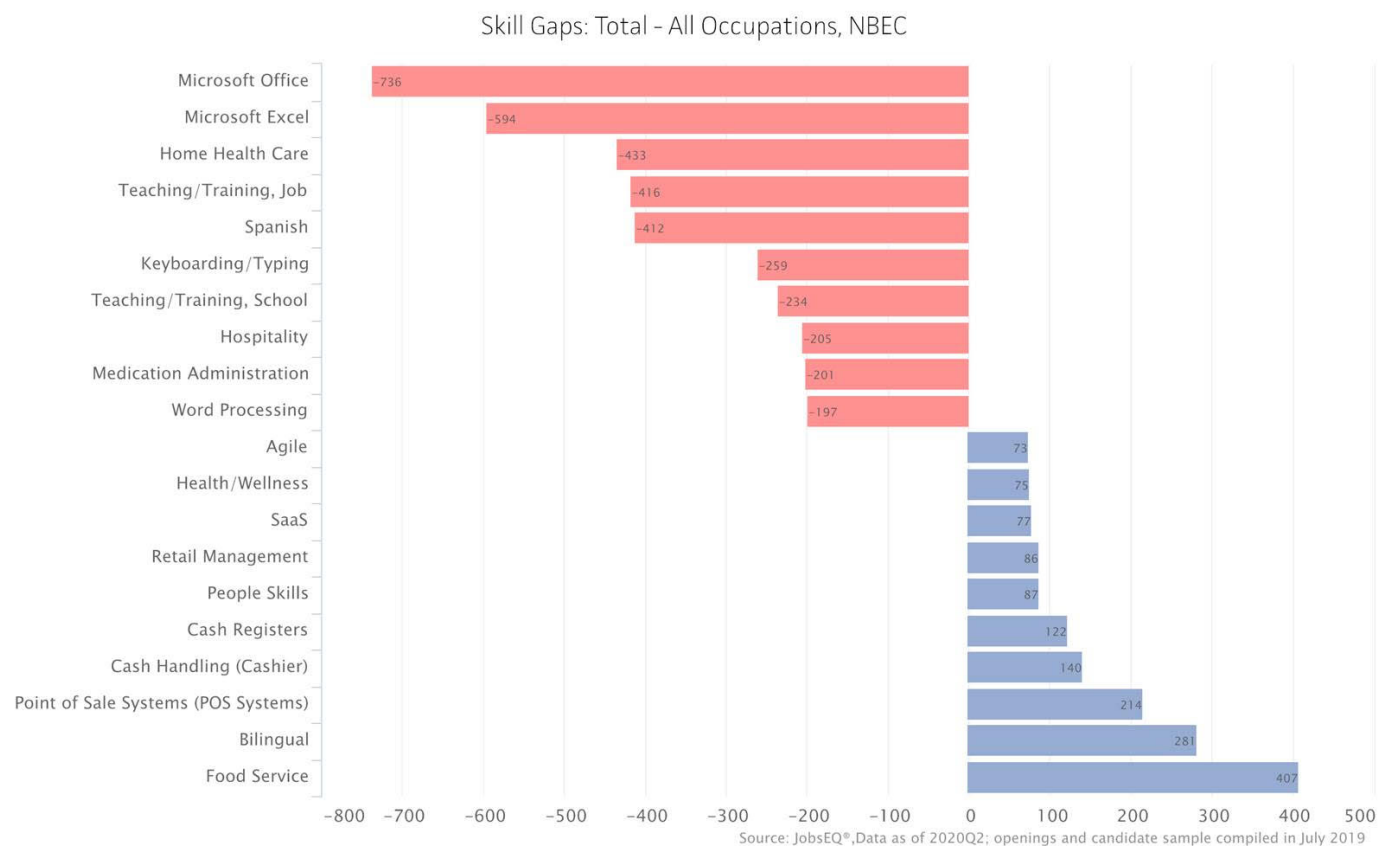
Underemployment



SOURCE: EMSI

A skill gap is defined as the difference between the supply and demand for a skill. In the following table, positive gaps are surpluses of a skill and negative gaps represent a shortage of a skill. Skill supply (candidates) is collected from resume data; demand (openings) is collected

from job postings. The following table illustrates a skills gap analysis for the North Bay region, using JobsEQ data from July 2019 (pre-pandemic).



Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

It is essential to preface any labor market analysis with an acknowledgement of the COVID-19 pandemic's deep impact on the regional economy, and indeed, the world. Unemployment rates are highest in Solano, Mendocino, and Lake, but across all six counties have risen significantly from pre-pandemic levels. For example, the jobs lost in Solano County during the first six months of the pandemic essentially negated the job gains of the past five years in the county, and about 60% of Solano County's self-employed workers have applied for unemployment insurance under the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. Sonoma County saw almost 144,000 initial UI claims for the period of mid-March through the end of October, and over 27,000 claims for PUA. Between March and December 2020, Sonoma County held 451 Rapid Response events. In the third quarter alone, the Solano WDB assisted 255 businesses, predominantly with applying for Lay Off Aversion Fund support. The pandemic's effect on the RPU's nonprofit organizations (especially their provision of workforce-essential services such as small business support and childcare centers) will also have deep effects on the region's future safety net infrastructure. The RPU is planning to use some of its RPI 4.0 resources to better understand the impacts of the pandemic on the regional economy and workforce.

The Bay Area Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (California Community Colleges) released an analysis in December 2020 which examined job losses by industry across the Bay Area. For the time period of March 2020 – November 2020, the Leisure and Hospitality sector suffered the greatest job losses. Food and beverage stores (such as grocery stores) have seen increased employment, while jobs are down for indoor food and drink establishments (restaurants and bars). The below table shows the data for the North Bay counties that were included in this Bay Area analysis. Leisure and Hospitality job losses were somewhat less severe for Marin County than for Napa, Sonoma, and Solano.

Darker grey boxes represent sectors and lighter grey boxes represent industry groups (subsets of sectors). Job losses are color coded by their level of severity (Blue = jobs gained; Green = 0-9% lost; Yellow = 10-19% jobs lost; Red = 20% or more lost).

Industry	Marin	Napa	Solano	Sonoma
Leisure and Hospitality	-14%	-30%	-24%	-22%
Accommodation & Food Services	Not Available	-27%	-23%	-26%
Food Services & Drinking Places	Not Available	-44%	-25%	-44%
Other Services	-15%	-14%	-23%	-14%
Manufacturing	-4%	-9%	-7%	6%
Government	-9%	-9%	-3%	-17%
Nondurable Goods	Not Available	-8%	-6%	-4%
Construction	6%	Not Available	3%	-3%
Natural Resources, Mining & Construction	6%	4%	3%	-3%
Educational & Health Services	-6%	4%	-7%	-3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	Not Available	3%	-7%	-2%
Information	-8%	0%	-18%	-15%
Professional & Business Services	-4%	1%	-18%	-3%
Administrative & Support & Waste Services	Not Available	0%	-16%	-6%
Financial Activities	0%	-4%	4%	1%
Finance & Insurance	Not Available	Not Available	0%	4%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	0%	-15%	0%	3%
Wholesale Trade	-12%	-6%	-9%	-7%
Retail Trade	-7%	7%	-4%	-7%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	-7%	1%	-4%	-6%
Food & Beverage Stores	Not Available	Not Available	6%	4%
Total Farm	0%	-7%	8%	-7%
Total Nonfarm	-7%	-8%	-8%	-7%

SOURCE: Bay Area Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research, Dec 2020 newsletter.

The Harvard-based Opportunities Insights Economic Tracker² combines anonymized data from leading private companies to provide a real-time picture of economic indicators. According to its data, small business revenue suffered significant losses from January to December 2020. The below table includes the percent change in small business revenue as well as the percent change in the number of small businesses that are open, by county.

Small Business Changes, January to December 2020

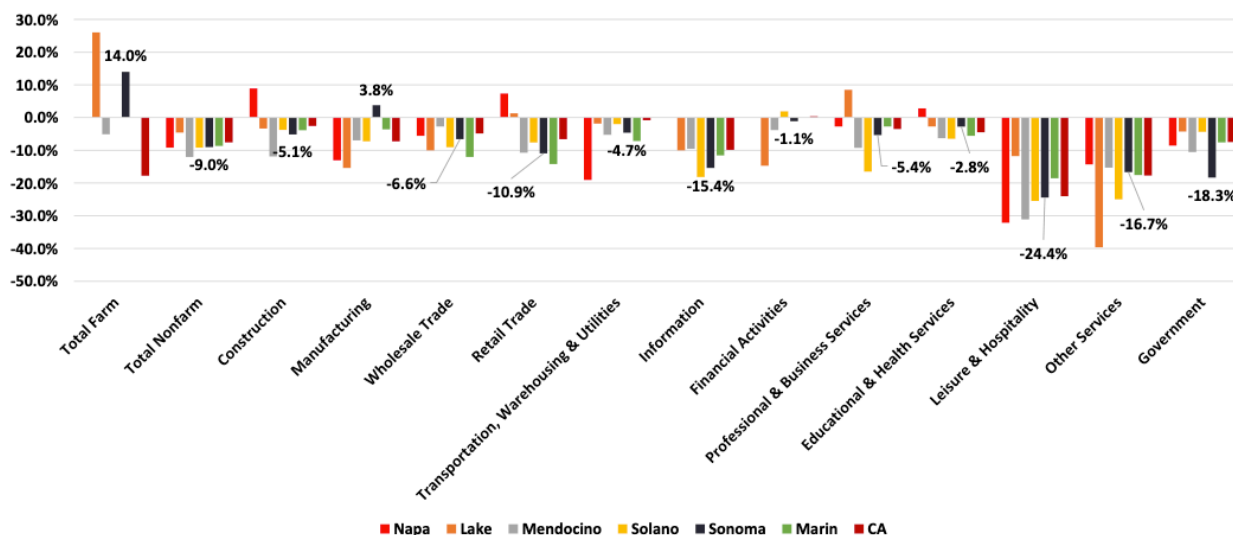
County	% change in small business revenue	% change in # of small businesses open
Lake	-28.4%	-27.3%
Marin	-46.2%	-38.4%
Mendocino	-28.5%	-31.6%
Napa	-34.7%	-27%
Solano	-21.7%	-38.1%
Sonoma	-46.2%	-39.8%

Furthermore, the Economic Tracker used payroll and timesheet data from private companies to determine the percent change in employment, comparing January to October 2020. While California saw employment decrease by 8.2%, most of the North Bay saw even larger decreases, including -15.3% in Marin, -12.5% in Sonoma, -17.9% in Napa, -12.2% in Solano, -9.1% in Mendocino, and -6% in Lake.

Dr. Rob Eyler, a professor of economics at Sonoma State University and the President of Economic Forensics and Analytics Inc, presented on the economic impact of COVID-19 to the Sonoma WDB in January 2021. His analysis of employment changes by industry for the North Bay found across the board declines, with the exception of Farm jobs, with the steepest drops in Leisure and Hospitality, and Other Services. In his presentation, he stated that it is difficult to predict what industries will be in demand in two years. While Construction, Manufacturing, and Professional Services seem likely have strong recoveries, it is unclear what the future holds for customer service occupations, as well as occupations that may be impacted by automation, including administrative services and sales/retail jobs. The following image shows Dr. Eyler's analysis of employment impacts by industry.

² <https://opportunityinsights.org/tracker-resources/>

Employment Changes by Industry % Change from Previous Year, November 2020, Sonoma County and Selected Areas



Source: California EDD and EFA

Therefore, as the below labor market analysis is primarily based on pre-pandemic data, the figures may appear overly optimistic, and the outlook will most likely change as the long-term aftermath of COVID-19 becomes clearer.

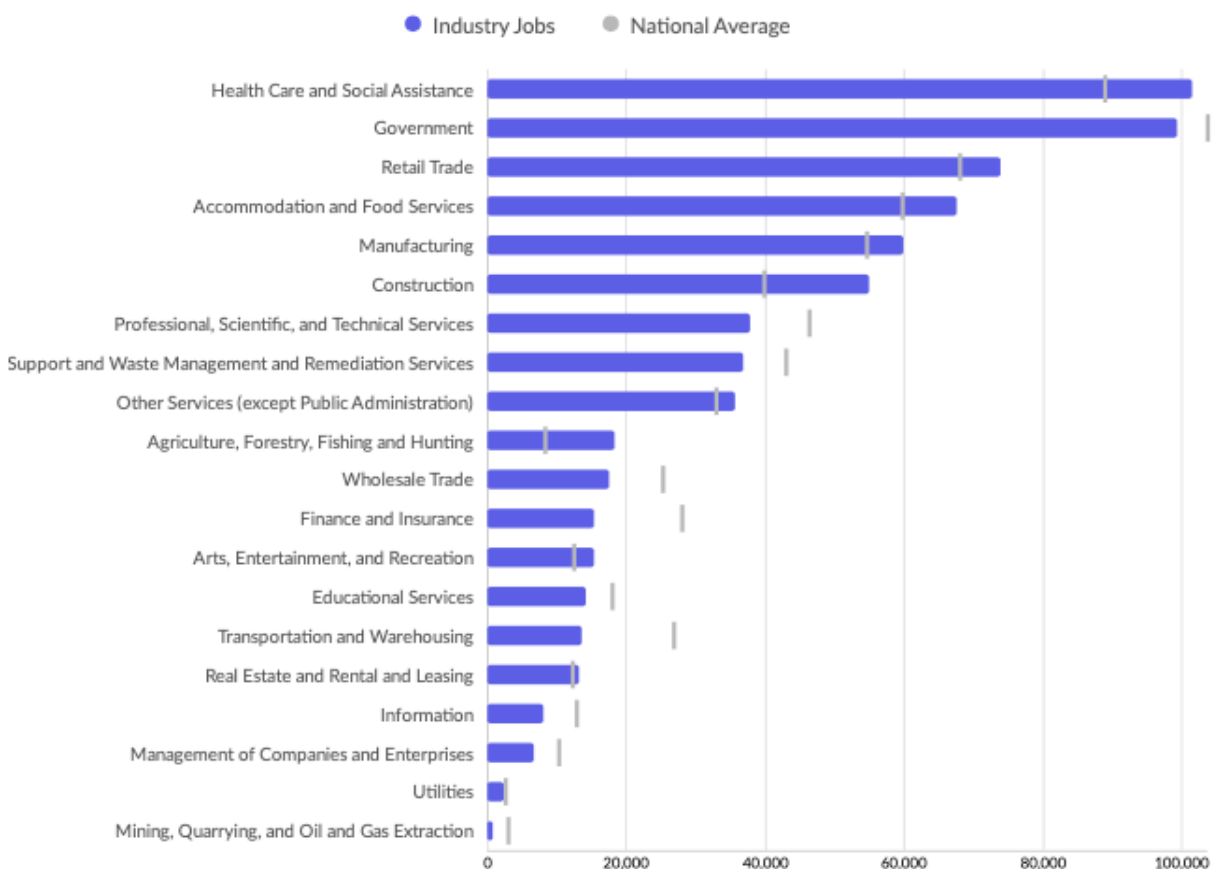
B. Fostering Demand-Driven Skills Attainment

- *Identify the in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.*
- *Describe how the RPU and regional partners will expand or develop, and then implement sector initiatives for those in-demand industry sectors or occupations.*

The largest sectors in the North Bay by employment are:

1. Healthcare and Social Assistance
2. Government
3. Retail Trade
4. Accommodation and Food Services
5. Manufacturing
6. Construction

These sectors have a larger presence in the regional economy than the national average, with the exception of Government. Average earnings in Healthcare and Social Assistance across the region range from \$42,223 to \$81,002, in Government from \$69,266 to \$115,971, in Retail Trade range \$37,435 to \$55,141, in Accommodation from \$22,368 to \$41,920 in Manufacturing from \$58,603 to \$187,376, and in Construction from \$51,811 to \$97,582. The following table illustrates the proportion of North Bay jobs in comparison to national averages.



SOURCE: EMSI

The next figure shows the fastest growing sectors since 2015 for the North Bay region. Construction as well as Healthcare and Social Assistance jobs saw the most significant gains in new positions. Manufacturing has seen job growth in food and beverage makers; the wine industry (which links to the Agriculture, Manufacturing, Tourism, Retail, and Transportation industries) has been a major source of jobs for this region, reflected in the growth of food services and agricultural sector jobs.

Top Growing Sectors (Top 12), 2020, Payroll Employment by Employers, Number of Workers, North Bay Region

Industry	Numeric Job Growth
Construction	10,411
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,133
Manufacturing	4,136
Admin and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	2,011
Accommodation and Food Services	2,991
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,104
Government	2,506
Transportation and Warehousing	2,148
Educational Services	1,400
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	561
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	683
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	412

SOURCE: EMSI

There is demonstrated growth in higher-paying, middle-skill occupations as well. EDD calculated North Bay RPU occupational data based on middle skill analysis, offering more insight on openings in more desirable middle skill occupations. 40% of these occupations fall under the Healthcare and Social Assistance cluster, and 10% fall under the Construction cluster. See table below.

Top 20 Middle Skill Occupations by Total Job Openings in the North Bay RPU (2016-2026)

Occupational Title	Total Openings	Median Hourly Wage	Median Annual Wage	Industry Category
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	9,104	\$25.27	\$52,564	Investment Support Services
Teacher Assistants	6,799		\$34,782	Education
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,781	\$25.82	\$53,704	Construction
Medical Assistants	5,091	\$22.31	\$46,416	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Nursing Assistants	4,450	\$18.43	\$38,335	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	3,766	\$24.83	\$51,640	Automotive Repair and Maintenance

Dental Assistants	2,841	\$25.70	\$53,457	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2,413	\$13.92	\$28,942	Personal Care Services
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,282	\$32.51	\$67,629	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	2,099	\$20.21	\$42,038	Education
Massage Therapists	1,896	\$15.18	\$31,587	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Computer User Support Specialists	1,335	\$28.97	\$60,265	Computer Systems Design and Related Services
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	1,215	\$25.96	\$54,005	Construction
Manicurists and Pedicurists	1,211	\$14.06	\$29,241	Personal Care Services
Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	1,066	\$16.59	\$34,496	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	940			Healthcare and Social Assistance
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	922	\$29.18	\$60,698	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services
Firefighters	847	\$35.01	\$72,829	Local Government
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	737	\$18.83	\$39,155	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	721			Healthcare and Social Assistance

SOURCE: EDD

Based on the preceding data, six sectors (or industry clusters) can be identified as having a prominent place in the economy of the 6-county North Bay RPU:

- Healthcare & Social Assistance (NAICS 62)
- Government (NAICS 92)
- Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45)
- Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72)
- Manufacturing (NAICS 31)
- Construction (NAICS 23)

The RPU has chosen to focus on the following sectors for the regional plan because of the availability of middle skill jobs with good wages as well as projected growth and sustainability: Healthcare and Social Assistance; Manufacturing; and Construction. However, due to the scope and local needs in the region, as well as the potentially changing industry landscape due to COVID-19, there may be other sub-regional targeted industries.

Health Care and Social Assistance

This sector provides over 101,000 jobs in the region and is projected to grow 11.5% from 2020-2025. The average earnings in the North Bay for this sector is \$73,257, compared to \$62,975 nationally. Among the occupations with the greatest numbers of jobs in this sector are Home Health and Personal Aides (22,000+ jobs and 21.8% of total sector jobs); Registered Nurses (almost 9,000 jobs and 8.9%); and Medical Assistants (3,600+ jobs and 3.6%).

Health Care and Social Assistance Sector Jobs

	Region	Lake	Marin	Mendo	Napa	Solano	Sonoma
2020 Jobs	101,543	5,046	18,622	6,074	9,180	27,217	35,146
% Change (2020-25)	11.5%	15%	7.6%	9.4%	9%	13.1%	11.3%
Job Growth	11,638	759	1,410	573	829	4,087	3,968
Avg Wages	\$73,257	\$42,223	\$77,924	\$50,292	\$71,314	\$81,488	\$73,661
GRP	\$9.9 B	\$265 M	\$2.0 B	\$393 M	\$817 M	\$3.1 B	\$3.4 B

Source: EMSI

Manufacturing

The Manufacturing industry sector is comprised of establishments engaged in the mechanical, physical, or chemical transformation of materials, substances, or components into new products. It includes both durable goods and non-durable goods manufacturers. This sector also includes establishments engaged in both manufacturing and selling products to the general public (wines, for example). Advanced Manufacturing is a subset of the industry that employs advanced manufacturing technologies, processes, or materials in the manufacture of their products.

The manufacturing sector provides almost 60,000 jobs in the region and is projected to grow 3.4% from 2020-2025. Beverage Product Manufacturing is the largest industry within the sector (approximately 20,000 jobs). The average earnings in the North Bay for this sector is \$113,329, compared to \$86,765 nationally. In 2020 there were 2,278 payrolled business locations for this sector. The largest occupations in this industry are Separating, Filtering, Clarifying, Precipitating, and Still Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders (3,174 jobs), Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders (3,031 jobs), Demonstrators and Product Promoters (2,384 jobs), Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (1,935 jobs), and Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators (1,729 jobs). The average compensation is over \$113,000 per year. The highest average compensation in the region is found in Marin and Solano Counties, while the lowest average compensation is found in Lake and Mendocino Counties.

Manufacturing Sector Jobs

	Region	Lake	Marin	Mendo	Napa	Solano	Sonoma
2020 Jobs	59,862	432	5,690	2,542	14,214	12,729	24,170
% Change (2020-25)	3.4%	5.1%	14.6%	-2.9%	5.7%	6.3%	-1.5%
Job Growth	2,035	22	831	-74	810	816	-363
Avg Wages	\$113,329	\$58,603	\$187,376	\$68,554	\$91,211	\$139,523	\$101,795
GRP	\$16.5 B	\$57 M	\$2.8 B	\$350 M	\$2.5 B	\$5.5 B	\$5.2 B

SOURCE: EMSI

Construction

The Construction sector has grown in importance over the last several years because of the increased need for a workforce to help rebuild communities after devastating wildfires, particularly in Sonoma County. The construction sector provides approximately 55,000 jobs in the region and is projected to grow 9.5% from 2020-2025. The average earnings in the North Bay for this sector is \$83,520, compared to \$69,541 nationally. In 2020 there were 5,150 payrolled business locations. The occupations with the largest numbers of jobs in this sector include carpenters (7,759 or 14.1% of all jobs); construction laborers (7,540 or 13.7%); painters, construction and maintenance (3,095 or 5.6%) and electricians (3,061 or 5.6%).

Construction Sector Jobs

	Region	Lake	Marin	Mendo	Napa	Solano	Sonoma
2020 Jobs	54,955	1,368	10,008	2,564	5,556	13,950	20,871
% Change (2020-25)	9.5%	10.9%	2.9%	2.0%	6.9%	6.4%	12.4%
Job Growth	5,221	149	290	51	383	952	2,558
Avg Comp	\$83,520	\$51,811	\$83,392	\$54,050	\$83,311	\$97,582	\$77,832
GRP	\$6.2 B	\$99 M	\$1.1 B	\$196 M	\$645 M	\$1.9 B	\$2.2 B

SOURCE: EMSI

Regional Industry Strategies

The RPU and its partners have undertaken to support priority sectors and/or occupations through a number of strategies.

- One of the early regional grants allowed for NBEC to staff a number of Industry Sector Partnerships, including a Marin-Sonoma Healthcare Partnership (<http://marinsonomahealthcarepartnership.org/about/>), a Napa-Solano Healthcare Partnership, a Napa Hospitality Industry Partnership (<https://www.napahip.com>), and some early efforts at a Manufacturing partnership in Napa and Solano. These groups undertook some fruitful projects including the creation of information videos about careers, produced by local students. Leadership of the Napa HIP was assumed by a local chamber of commerce and that group continues to meet.
- The Solano WDB is working with the City of Vacaville on their biomanufacturing business development initiatives and is supporting a new “Manufacturing Employer

Roundtable” led in collaboration with the City and the Solano SBDC, hosted by the WDB. They have also been working with smaller healthcare providers such as community clinics and public health to support talent recruitment and development since many smaller healthcare employers struggle to compete with the largest healthcare organizations. The Solano WDB also partners with the Laborers’ and local adult schools to host an annual pre-apprenticeship program for out-of-school youth to prepare for construction laborer positions.

- Sonoma WDB has implemented a health care earn and learn program in partnership with a local health care employer in which job seekers are hired into positions with career pathways utilizing WIOA on-the-job training funds. Additionally, Sonoma WDB coordinates and hosts industry specific “spotlights” which are events, currently virtual, at which job seekers can learn more from the employer directly about jobs in the industry, upcoming recruitments, tips on applying, and opportunities to speak with HR representatives directly.
- WANB is partnering with an ecological restoration firm in the construction sector to develop a talent pipeline for this specialized industry.
- The entire region worked to support the Trades Introduction Program (TIP) which is offered on a rotating basis throughout the region’s counties, to introduce job seekers to and streamline their entry into apprenticeship programs in the trades.

Ultimately, though, all of these sectors and employers have been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and these partnerships would need to be revisited, if appropriate, after the pandemic. The needs of industries will most likely be very different after the pandemic as well.

On the ground level, NBEC is using its RPI 3.0 funds to implement a training cohort best practice model developed by Sonoma County. Through these training cohorts, the WDBs are able to directly meet some of the workforce needs of their priority sectors. Sonoma County has held two cohorts, one in healthcare and one for English Language Learners in Construction; Solano has a cohort planned for healthcare; and WANB is working to prepare under-represented populations for careers in wild fire response.

C. Enabling Upward Mobility for All Californians

- *Describe how the RPU will prioritize working with employers who provide quality jobs that provide economic security through family-sustaining wages and comprehensive benefits. This should include whether the RPU has, or plans to develop, a formal policy related to job quality.*
- *Describe how the RPU and regional partners will work together to identify shared target populations and develop targeted service strategies.*
- *Describe how the RPU and regional partners will work with employers and training providers to ensure that historically unserved and underserved communities have equal access to the regional sector pathways, earn and learn opportunities, supportive services, and other approaches identified by the RPU. This should include whether the RPU has, or plans to develop, a formal policy related to equity.*

One of NBEC's primary strategies for prioritizing employers who provide quality jobs is through its focus on its priority sectors. As outlined in the economic analysis above, these sectors were selected because they offer family-sustaining wages and comprehensive benefits, are accessible to job seekers of varying education levels and contain career ladders that allow for progression through greater training to greater economic security. Furthermore, they are the sectors that are predicted to best weather the COVID-19 pandemic. The training cohorts that NBEC will be supporting with RPI 3.0 funds will assist participants in gaining employment in quality jobs with career growth potential. Although there is no regional policy related to job quality, efforts are taking place on the local level. The WDBs of the North Bay RPU have infused self-sufficiency standards into their policies, including OJT policies, and employer partnership efforts are focused on businesses that provide family-sustaining wages.

Resources will always be too limited for any one entity to be alone in tackling the challenges facing the workforce development system. Therefore, the NBEC leadership will continue to collaborate with partners to ensure that resources are leveraged to the fullest extent possible, and that job seekers are able to access the resources needed for their success, particularly communities that have been historically under-served or limited in their access to economic success. In addition to the WIOA core partners, the North Bay region is reliant on a robust and critical system of community-based organizations (CBOs) to reach and work with groups that have some of the most significant barriers to employment. CBO partners participate in program development, outreach, and specialized supportive services, in coordination with one-stop partner groups across the region. By working with these community-embedded organizations and ensuring appropriate referral and co-enrollment, the workforce system is better able to assist individuals with accessing regional sector pathways and connecting them with needed supportive services and resources to ensure that they will remain in relevant programs as they work their way through career pathways.

The most common partnerships with CBOs focus on additional wrap-around supports for vulnerable populations in order to enhance their accessibility to the workforce system and ensure their inclusion in the workforce. CBOs that work closely with WDBs in the region include Homeward Bound of Marin, which serves homeless individuals and has partnered to offer vocational training in a priority industry and supportive services to WIOA clients. Solano and Marin work with SparkPoint, who augments services through financial literacy and credit

counseling. Sonoma works with California Human Development, Community Action Partnership and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to provide supports to job seekers who are undocumented. Regionally, the Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA) and Legal Services of Northern California work in collaboration with multiple counties to provide legal support to reduce barriers to employment. CenterPoint is another regional CBO that focuses on individuals involved in the justice system throughout northern California and works with NBEC partners to host a regional re-entry resource and career fair for ex-offenders.

The Solano WDB has prioritized individuals with disabilities and building partnerships to support this community, including a co-case management partnership with Caminar through AB1111 funds. Solano has focused more intensively on supporting the county's homeless population through the Fighting Back Partnership, which came out of Project Room Key and the subsequent Home Key, as well as partnering with Volunteers of Northern California on a new Rapid Rehousing grant. Solano has also prioritized additional supports for those impacted by the criminal justice system, creating the Systems-Impacted in Solano Network with over 50 partners, including many of the community and faith-based organizations working in this sphere. This network is co-led with the community-based organization Abundant Place.

The Sonoma WDB has a collaborative training program for English Language Learners, currently in its fifth cohort. The program connects WIOA Title 1 and Title 2 resources centered on an ESL/Construction class. A new feature of the program is the post-class connection to local employers. Working in partnership with the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, nine local Construction employers have formally signed on to providing prioritized access to opportunities in pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, employment and further training. The program also weaves in other social services such as child care, legal services and others to address real-life challenges students face in completing training programs.

Additional coordination with CBOs can be found in youth programming throughout the region. VOICES operates in Napa, Sonoma and Solano working with at-risk youth involved with the foster care, mental health, and juvenile justice systems. Sonoma County partners with Social Advocates for Youth, West County Community Services, Petaluma People's Services, the Center for Social and Environmental Stewardship, and Conservation Corp North Bay in the implementation of their youth programs. Petaluma People Services is also the contracted WIOA youth service provider for Marin County. Mendocino partners with Redwood Quality Management and Mendocino County Youth Project to reach at risk youth and provide wrap around services.

CBO partners are an integral part of the pipeline to direct clients into regional sector pathways, either by directly providing training for in-demand occupations themselves, exposing youth clients to careers in demand sectors or providing wrap-around services to reduce barriers to employment. Every WDB in the region includes CBO members on its board. Additionally, the Career Services Provider in Mendocino and Lake Counties is a CBO. These partnerships have allowed the North Bay to develop targeted service strategies, and ensure that historically under-represented groups in the labor force are able to have equal access to regional sector pathways and resources to support their success.

All WDBs in the North Bay region actively partner with the Trades Introduction Program, the MC3 certified pre-apprenticeship program sponsored by the North Bay Labor Council. The NBLC was recently awarded an SB 1 grant which will be utilized along with leveraged WIOA Title 1 funds to provide TIP classes throughout the region. The current class is being held in the Sonoma County AJCC, Job Link. During the regional planning period, TIP is also planned to be held at the Solano County AJCC in Fairfield.

NBEC is heartened by the greater focus on equity and social justice that arose in 2020, a focus which aligns well with the traditionally targeted customer base of the North Bay workforce system. Many of the Workforce Boards' host organizations or partners in local government are developing their own equity initiatives or offices – for example, Sonoma County recently formed an Office of Equity; Marin County has an Equity Officer in the County Administrator's Office, and Solano County is involved in the Solano Equity Collaborative. Solano's Workforce Board decided in January 2021 that Equity and Economic Justice will be their top local priority out of the regional objectives. NBEC directors will work locally to ensure that workforce programs are aligned with any forthcoming equity initiatives. Staff development in this area is also planned throughout the region, and the directors will continue to share and learn from each other's best practices.

D. Aligning, Coordinating, and Integrating Programs and Services

- *Describe any regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements or MOU.*
- *Describe any regional administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs for the region.*

The NBEC RPU developed and executed a regional MOU in May 2018 which established norms for partnering and communicating as an RPU. Sonoma County serves as the fiscal agent although each situation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Non-fiscal agent WDBs are treated as contractors for purposes of shared regional grants, unless otherwise required by statute. The directors agreed to work together on meaningful shared projects that add value and to always maintain local decision-making authority. Additional regional service strategies have previously been described in this plan, including a robust use of data, targeting services to priority sectors, and ensuring access for all groups by working closely with local community partners.

Although for a variety of logistical, practical and political reasons NBEC has not established administrative cost sharing arrangements or other formalized structures for the RPU, the three WDB directors work together to ensure regional initiatives have a positive impact on the North Bay. NBEC has engaged in these additional regional service strategies:

- Shared efforts on industry sector initiatives and business services.
- At the regularly scheduled regional meetings, best practices are discussed and shared on a variety of policy issues, including best practices and how to address challenges in tracking and reporting performance outcomes. Additionally, WDB members and staff are invited to attend WDB meetings in other local areas within the region to hear about or discuss a topic of mutual interest.
- As a result of a mutually identified need for staff development, the RPU hosted a regional conference in February 2020, the first in many years. Board members and staff of each WDB along with partner agency staff were able to attend a full day of workshops and had numerous opportunities to network with their peers.
- WDB staff work collaboratively across boards in the collection and analysis of regional labor market data and on targeted regional initiatives like virtual job fairs
- In RPI 3.0, NBEC intends to use a cohort training model best practice developed by Sonoma County in order to address a number of priorities locally.

In summary, NBEC continues to meet and exceed the federal requirements for regional planning. The WDBs of the North Bay will continue to work together to meet the needs of a post-pandemic labor market, and will strive to provide the best possible services to their communities.