



## Del Norte CED Needs Assessment

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### Purpose

This report documents Del Norte County's community and economic development (CED) needs and identifies clientele needs for the Del Norte UCCE CED advisor. The information is used to develop an applied research and extension education strategy for the advisor in Del Norte County.

### Scope

This report explores the needs of CED clientele on a wide range of topics, some outside the traditional UC ANR scope. The report's geographic scope is limited to Del Norte County, California.

### Structure and Methods

The report follows a Community Capitals Framework to categorize assets and needs. It briefly departs from the method to clarify specific topics or provide interpretation and possible program responses. The report relies on a secondary data review and semi-structured clientele interviews with 24 clients. Interviewees were selected to represent the different fields contributing to economic development with a focus on organizations currently finding success.

### Del Norte Background

Del Norte County is rural and rugged, with almost all the population and economic activity taking place on 4% of the land in and around Crescent City. **Del Norte's Human Development Index, HDI, in 2021 was 4.17 out of 10, with the state's HDI being 5.85 out of 10.** This index considers "a long and healthy life", "access to knowledge," and "a decent standard of life." Compared to the state, the

county has lower income levels, health metrics, and higher levels of poverty and rent burdens.

The county's economy was characterized by large natural resource industries that supplied jobs to the region. It is now led in employment by government, healthcare, and tourism. This shift has left the county unsure of where to direct economic development, with no clear plans for what industries to target or tactics to support development.

**TABLE 2 Human Development Index by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity in Del Norte County**

RANK	HDI	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (years)	EDUCATION INDEX (out of 10)	MEDIAN EARNINGS (\$)
California	5.85	81.1	5.45	39,900
Del Norte	4.17	78.3	3.50	30,200
<b>GENDER</b>				
1 Women	4.47	80.8	4.25	26,500
2 Men	3.83	76.1	2.82	32,900
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
1 White	4.90	77.6	5.33	33,300
2 Latino	4.60	86.2	3.15	23,800
3 Native American	2.38*	72.1	3.12*	21,400*
Asian			7.09*	
Black			4.77*	
<b>GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
1 White Women	5.35	80.9	5.90	30,500
2 Latina Women	4.82	89.4	3.87	19,500
3 White Men	4.55	74.6	4.76	37,100
4 Latino Men	4.30	83.5	2.63	26,600
5 Native American Men	2.55*	71.4	2.57*	25,900*
6 Native American Women	2.19	73.0	3.64*	17,300

Source: Life expectancy: Measure of America calculations using mortality data from the California Department of Public Health, 2014–2020. Education and Earnings: US Census Bureau.  
Note: ACS, 2016–2020.

\* Asterisks indicate estimates with higher unreliability.

(Figure 1: Del Norte Counties low HDI Scores: Spotlight on Del Norte)

## Clientele needs background

The advisor's clientele are government staff and policymakers, tribes, non-profits, NGOs, small business development groups, local businesses, and local economic development professionals. **In clientele interviews, increased staff capacity rose to the top of needs.** Organizations need short-term, direct capacity building, and the advisor needs to build relationships and credibility. In the medium and long term, clientele need training that is immediately applicable and easily digestible on topics starting from the basics of economic development. Along with training on best practices

and “how to” training, the clientele is looking for examples of success from other rural counties.

Technical assistance and research are needed on new and efficient uses of Del Norte’s natural resources and best practices from communities that have transitioned from single-industry economies.

Workforce development is a vital part of Del Norte’s economic development and a priority for clientele. **Workforce development clientele require capacity building. Medium-term, groups in this area are interested in building collaboration with other local institutions, receiving training and guidance on community-scale workforce development and attraction/retention strategies.** The Smart Workforce Center is a strong resource but works one-on-one. **In the long term, my clientele wants a program addressing how to stem youth flight and the brain drain issue by “growing our own” professionals and allowing youth to enter a living wage career locally.**

**Clientele are interested in community infrastructure, physical and organizational, that is resilient to shocks, economic or physical.** To this end, clientele are interested in direct capacity building to advance current projects. Clientele will benefit from research to determine what makes a resilient economy and community in the context of rural California and how to evaluate their programs’ success.

As the area struggles to find its identity after many boom and bust cycles, tourism is emerging as an area of interest. **Tourism clientele are interested in growing tourism sustainably and how other communities have succeeded.** Short-term, tourism-focused clientele need capacity building, especially in developing concrete tourism strategies with economic impact monitoring. Medium-term organizations are looking for regional collaborations, especially with land managers and tourism marketing groups. Long-term clientele wants a “Redwood Coast” tourism development plan beyond a Del Norte plan. Developing this sustainable regional strategy will be a cross county goal of the advisor.

A common theme is a desire for external examples of success or failure. A statewide CED network will bring these examples together and allow UCCE advisors to share insights from the territory and bring their experiences to Del Norte.

## Current community priority information

Local governments have conducted extensive processes to identify community needs and priorities for development. The document provides a guide for the advisor to ensure their work supports moving in the direction residents want.

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis from the 2020 CEDS concisely lists Del Norte's needs (addressing weaknesses and threats) and assets (leveraging strengths and opportunities).

**Table 1: Summary of SWOT Analysis from 2020 County CEDS**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The natural environment and associated amenities, such as County, State, and National Parks</li> <li>Sporting culture and recreational youth events</li> <li>Agricultural lands</li> <li>The airport</li> <li>The harbor</li> <li>An entrepreneurial spirit</li> <li>The strong cultural presence of four Native American Tribes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The persistent challenge of having "poor curb appeal"</li> <li>Deficiencies in collective regional tourism marketing efforts</li> <li>A collective tendency to dwell on failures rather than successes</li> <li>A shortage of living wage jobs</li> <li>Geographic isolation</li> <li>Coastal Commission regulations hindering development potential</li> <li>The fact that majority of the County is owned by the State and Federal Governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing national market for outdoor recreation</li> <li>Crescent City's growing relationship with its Japanese Sister City Rikuzentakata</li> <li>The expansion of river boating</li> <li>Room for growth in the realm of clean energy</li> <li>The prospect of additional small business loans</li> <li>Chances to acquire infrastructure grants</li> <li>Room for growth in the timber, fishing, and agricultural sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homelessness, drugs, and crime</li> <li>Lack of community pride</li> <li>Falling income levels and purchasing power</li> <li>Impacts of climate change on the fishing industry</li> <li>The risk of future tsunamis</li> <li>The high cost of healthcare</li> <li>The community's proximity to Oregon which has favorable taxes</li> </ul>

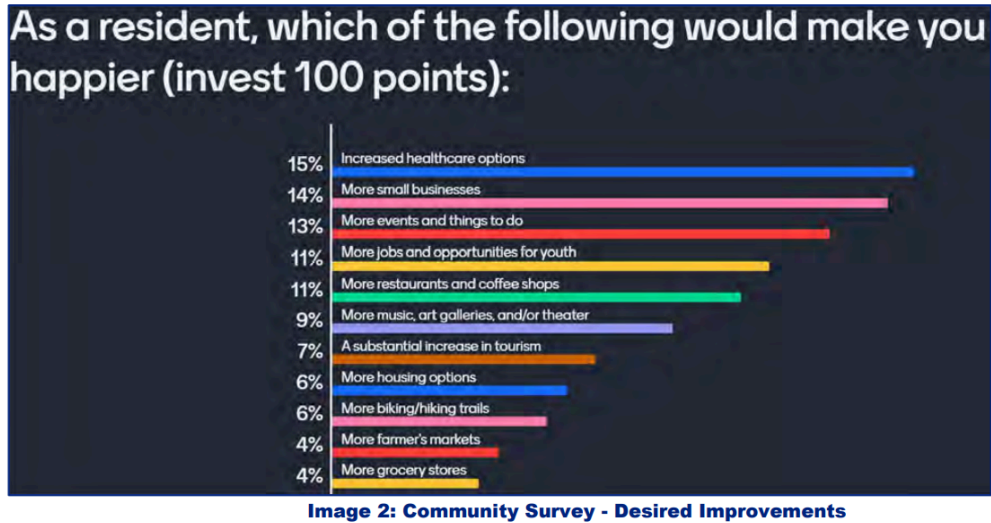
(Figure 2: SWOT analysis: Del Norte CEDS)

Crescent City's Economic Development Strategic Action Plan (EDSAP) used public surveys to determine where residents would like economic development and what would improve their lives in Del Norte. This information is vital in a small town where so much economic development work is done by concerned citizens who jump into a topic. This information is also useful in understanding youth flight and workforce attraction and retention as it provides the "pressure points" of what people want the community to be.



**Image 1: Community Survey - Preferred Economic Development Focus**

(Figure 3: Where should economic development focus: Crescent City EDSAP)



(Figure 4: What makes residents happy: Crescent City EDSAP)

## Clientele Interviews

The advisor conducted in-person, semi-structured interviews with key clientele to assess their direct needs and where they saw the most need in Del Norte. Being new to the community, the advisor wanted to connect in person to key stakeholders. This method worked well; many community organizations have started working with the advisor. This approach also allowed respondents to address what they saw as most important, compared to a survey with limited responses. Interviewees are not identified by name to preserve anonymity.

The four most mentioned Del Norte county economic development needs areas across all interviews were: increased staff capacity, housing, Offshore Floating Wind Farms (OFW) information, and collaboration. Other common focus areas were youth flight and population aging/decline, transportation, homelessness, lack of forward thinking in economic development, and tourism economics. Inside the subject areas, interviewees expressed a need for training designed to meet them where they are in terms of foundational content, i.e., training that is immediately applicable and fits into their limited time. Clientele expressed a need for research into the above topics, primarily focused on synthesizing other locale's responses and creating evaluation/monitoring frameworks for local CED projects.

## Interviews conducted

Sector	Number of interviews conducted
Local Gov	7

Tribal Gov	2
NGOs, Non-Profits, Quasi Gov	5
Cultural and Social	2
Workforce / Education	2
Businesses Including Ag.	4
Medical	2
total	24

## Secondary research summary

### Labor Market and Industry

Del Norte County's per capita and household incomes lag behind the state and the US, with a per capita income of \$43,667 and a median household income of \$57,297, both in 2022 dollars. (2) According to MIT's living wage calculator, the living wage for a single adult with no children in Del Norte is \$41,516.80 (\$19.96 per hour), and a household of 2 working adults with two children is \$83,075.20 (19.97 per hour). (4) This metric approximates a "living wage" that only accounts for the purchase of necessities (see MIT's methodology for specifics). (4) Del Norters' income has gained little ground relative to California. Del Norte's household income was 65% of Ca.'s in 2012 and 67% of Ca.'s in 2022. (5) Low incomes and purchasing power have been cited as contributing to the downward spiral of retail in Del Norte and Crescent City. (1)

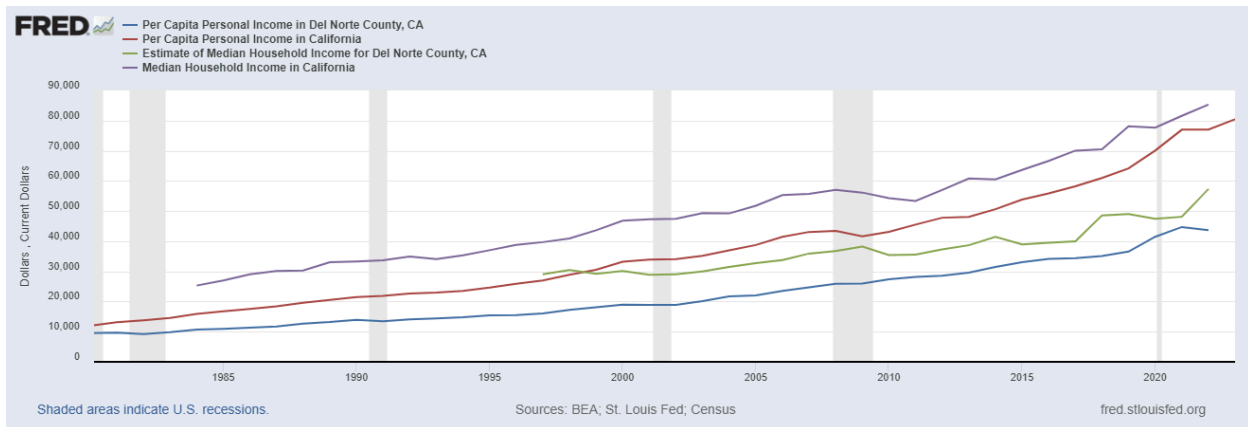


Figure 5: Del Norte falls below C.A. consistently: St. Lous Fed

Del Norte's unemployment rate has been above California's for almost the entirety of the 2000s, with Del Norte's February 2024 unemployment rate at 6.7% and California's at 5.3%. (6) Del Norte was once characterized by natural resource industries such as logging, mining, and fishing; however, this is no longer the case, as these industries have either entirely left or become a much smaller part of the economy.

The California Department of Transportation graph below shows Del Norte County's predicted negative job growth. (7) Despite these negative trends with the shrinking and aging population, the unemployment rate is not predicted to increase significantly. (7)

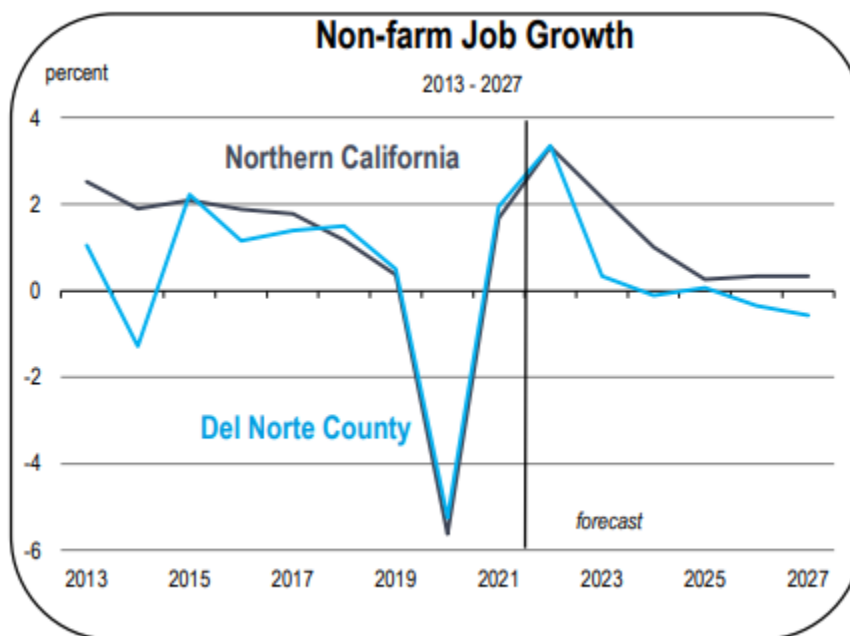


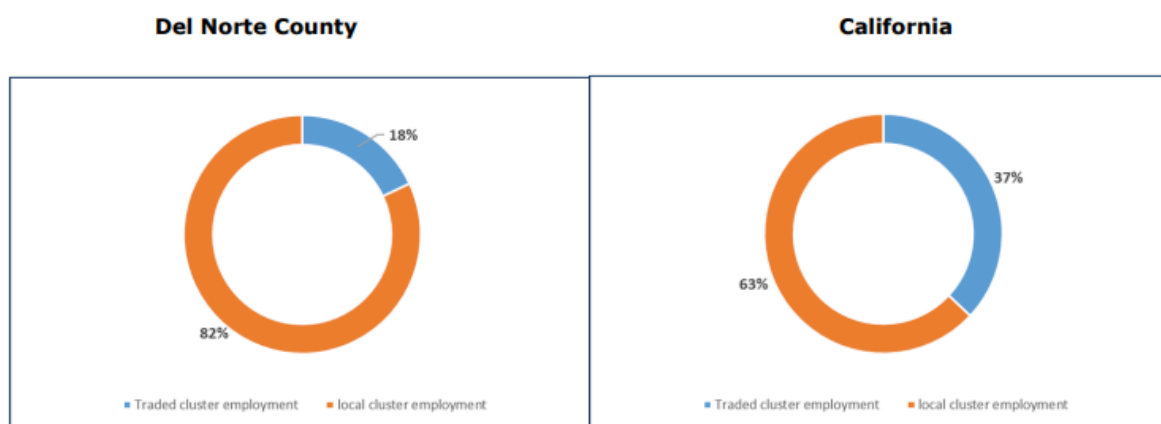
Figure 6: Projected job declines in Northern C.A. and Del Norte: CA DOT



As of 2015, government made up 42% of employment, followed by healthcare (16%), retail trade (11%), and accommodation and food service (8%). (8) Examining this list further, Crop production and fishing are listed ninth and tenth in terms of job-providing industries, respectively. (8) **Del Norte's current industry profile shows a highly undiversified economy**, and improving economic diversification is a common refrain among government and economic development professionals in the region.

The Del Norte economy consists largely of local cluster employment instead of traded cluster employment. (1) Local clusters provide goods and services locally, whereas traded clusters bring outside money into the county through exporting goods or services. Because Del Norte is heavily weighted toward local cluster employment, the low wages associated with these jobs further exacerbate any opportunities for economic growth. Similarly, traded clusters such as farming, fishing, and forestry have declined in employment numbers and appear poised to continue shrinking.

**Figure 7: Cluster Types in Del Norte County & California**



Del Norte County CEDS | Page 20

Figure 7: Del Norte's relatively local cluster-heavy employment compared to California: Del Norte County CEDS

Tourism brought in over \$130 million in spending in 2018, with Del Norte County regularly seeing over a million visitors yearly. (1) The CEDS reports direct tourism employment as 1460 FTE jobs, 15% of Del Norte's civilian Labor force. (1) The average wage in Del Norte for this industry as of 2018 was \$17,276 a year. (1) In addition to low wages, the tourism business is seasonal; in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, 42% of Del Norte's transient lodging tax (TLT) revenue came in Q1 (Jul-Sep) with 16% in Q2 (Oct-Dec), 14% in Q3 (Jan-Mar) and 28%Q4 (Apr-Jun). (9)

Local governments and NGOs repeatedly mentioned sustainable tourism development, which has avoided overuse issues in many West Coast tourist destinations. Improved marketing focusing on promoting the region was often mentioned, as was creating more outdoor recreation infrastructure. Support for outdoor recreation small businesses was a commonly heard need. Interviewees did not have



many examples of successful outdoor recreation economies but many examples of what they didn't want Del Norte to become. Finally, tourism lodging, especially higher-end options, was mentioned multiple times.

In 2018, fishing and forestry were Del Norte's 2nd and 3rd largest traded clusters, employing 147 individuals with an annual income of \$78,050 and 29 individuals with an average yearly income of \$32,632, respectively. (1) Given the higher wages of the fishing industry and its socio-historical importance to the county, supporting the fishing fleet will bolster economic diversification, create living wage jobs, and preserve a historically significant part of the region. Forestry remains an essential industry in Del Norte, making up 22% of agricultural product value in 2015. (1) Finally, Dairy, beef, and dairy products, followed by lily bulbs, make up the vast majority of agricultural product value. (1)

Healthcare is the largest of local clusters, with double the employment of the second highest industry, local hospitality, and dining. (1) Healthcare pays an average wage of over \$50,000 a year, but it is unclear how many healthcare workers are locals vs. traveling medical staff as the industry struggles to find employees. (1)

## Meeting the needs of the labor market and industries.

Interviews and secondary research show the need to support the creation of a living wage job and workforce development. The latter is covered in human capital. There is a need for small to large solutions, from supporting individual projects of clientele with capacity building and research to working with local and tribal governments on economic development strategies that provide living wage jobs and promote traded clusters. Research and extension are needed to respond to the unique gap left by natural resource industries, high-paying jobs that require relatively modest educational needs. Finally, regionally-focused tourism development needs capacity building to get the ball rolling; with research and extension, these interventions will ensure that local groups are creating the sustainable tourism they are interested in.

## Community cohesion, bonding, and bridging social capital

A CCRP project to track community wellness measures in Del Norte and Tribal Lands found that 75% of parents trust their neighbors to look after their children, while 50% of students feel safe in the neighborhood and at school. (10) The population size of Del Norte can be an asset to building bonding and bridging social capital. Due to the small population, residents interact more frequently with each other, initiating bonding social capital. Additionally, bridging social capital is likely bond groups since small-town life often necessitates that "everyone knows everyone"; because of this, forming connections between organizations may be more manageable.

Local government and other interviewees repeatedly mentioned increased intergovernmental collaboration, especially around economic development and planning. They also noted the county's lack of a dedicated economic development

person or department. Interviewees also mentioned increased government, non-profit/NGO coordination, and regional and Tribal collaboration.

## Meeting the needs of Del Norte's social capital

Because of UCCE's relationship with the county, the advisor is well-positioned to assist the county; however, further capacity building will be necessary. Supporting partnerships within and across county lines and subject areas is needed.

## Built Capital, housing stock, and infrastructure

Del Norte's built capital assets include Sutter Coast Hospital, Del Norte County Regional Airport (CEC), Pelican Bay State Prison, and Rumiano Cheese. An extensive network of trails and park/forest roads allows for outdoor recreation. The Crescent City Harbor is a safe haven and built capital asset in some of the US's roughest seas. With some of the largest hotels in the county, the Yurok and Tolowa Dee-ni' Tribes, along with the Elk Valley Rancheria's casinos/hotels, significantly increase the tourism capacity of the county.

Limited housing stock was often mentioned as a priority, with interviewees seeing a lack from low income to market value. Many housing developers want to build at a scale that is not feasible in Del Norte, which hampers new construction. Multiple interviewees mentioned employees having to decline jobs after being hired because they could not find housing. Lack of land for building is also an issue due to the high prevalence of federally and state-owned land. Low curb appeal and vacant buildings are often cited as issues that deter tourists and prospective residents, putting a damper on the downtown atmosphere of Crescent City. (1) My clientele is interested in finding innovative solutions to housing, especially workforce housing.

Since 2010, the countywide housing unit total has increased by 41, totaling 11,227 units in 2023. (12,13) According to 2022 census data, Del Norte's housing stock comprises 65% single-family units, 21% mobile homes, and 13% multi-unit homes. This is almost identical to the housing makeup found by CCRP for 2005-2009. (10) Furthermore, 56% of Del Norte's housing stock was built before 1979. (10) Housing built within this time frame may be subject to lead paint poisoning; more importantly, it indicates a largely outdated, aging housing stock. The county CEDS calls out the lack of multi-family houses, especially given the low median incomes. There are currently multiple housing projects in various stages of construction in Crescent City.

The chart below shows homes becoming relatively less affordable for Del Norte residents yet at a slower rate than the entirety of California. (7) Despite this relative "affordability" of homes, Del Norte has the third highest percentage (60%) of renters who are rent-burdened (i.e., more than 30% of income is used for housing costs). (3)

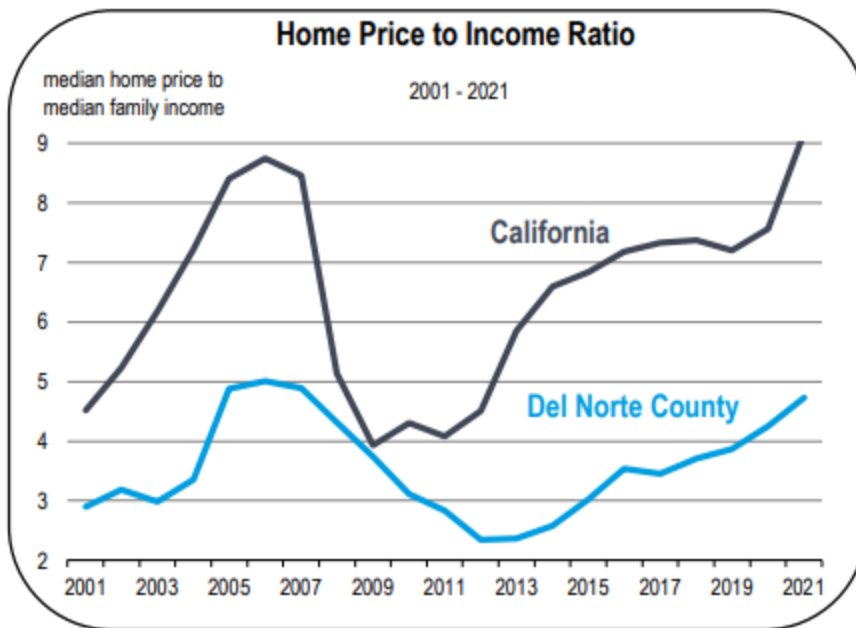


Figure 8: Del Norte and California home price-to-income ratios have increased steadily since the early 2010s: CA DOT

Del Norte is significantly Geographically isolated, with US 101 running North-South and linking the county to the Oregon Coast and Eureka, CA, respectively. CA 199 links Del Norte to Grants Pass and Medford, OR; the only utility line for the county follows this highway through the rugged Siskiyou mountains. 101 and 199 are narrow, windy, and prone to rockslides or falling debris; these obstacles can close the roads partially or fully and significantly restrict travel and commerce. (13) Almost all goods move in, out, and around Del Norte by truck, but Highway 199 has STAA trucking restrictions limiting the size of trucks. (1) This reliance on trucking and its limitations contribute to the high cost of goods in Del Norte. The transportation issues also make even light manufacturing or shipping businesses largely impractical in the county. Interviewees cited public transit as a workforce reliability stumbling block. The 2020 Del Norte Regional Transportation Plan explains that funding for local entities to maintain infrastructure has historically been the foremost hurdle to road maintenance. (13) Maintenance and improvement of roads and non-auto transportation are identified as the top transportation issue categories. (13)

CEC is a lifeline for the county, providing emergency medical transport and commercial flights for residents and tourists. CEC airport is a Joint Powers Authority JPA of multiple California and Oregon local governments and Tribes from the region. Due to the weather, flights are not always reliable, limiting their use for Bay Area commuters. There is an unusual and telling clientele among airport patrons: older residents who fly to San Francisco for medical care. Locally lead efforts have

significantly increased broadband access in Del Norte, with the Census reporting 89.6% of homes have broadband. (2)

The Smith River Complex (SRC) fires in the 199 corridor greatly affected the road, with traffic control still in effect seven months later. The SRC fires necessitated de-energizing Del Norte's only utility transmission line, and power had to be provided with massive generators for almost two weeks; however, this was not an instant response, and residents were without power for an average of X days. (13) The resulting weakened infrastructure led to loss of business, reduced work hours, and food spoilage; overall, the SRC fires cost residents an average of X and business Y.(13) Wildfire resilience has numerous economic development impacts as without reliable roads and utilities, businesses will not be motivated to expand to Del Norte County.

OFWs appear likely to be one of the most influential development projects for the region. Residents and interviewees have expressed the need for greater knowledge of OFW, including (1) how they could affect the region and (2) how Del Norte can engage with the resource to reap the maximum benefits. Residents are weary of the project in a region dominated by resource extraction industries for many years. Moreover, information from Humboldt and around the US is trickling into Del Norte, but more is needed. My clientele is hungry for science-based information on the economic impacts and a road map to community control and community benefits related to offshore wind.

## Meeting the needs of Del Norte's built capital

Addressing Del Norte's housing shortage is one of the linchpins of economic success in Del Norte. My clientele understands housing and appears to have limited direct capacity-building needs in this area. The advisor will be most effective in using research and extension to develop, identify, and disseminate innovative housing solutions from rural California, the USA, or novel.

CEC airport is an astounding asset to the community and an innovator, especially with respect to its cross-state JPA. Supporting the airport and learning from its JPA strategy, where possible, will contribute to its success.

Supporting clientele in resilient physical infrastructure and organizational infrastructure that responds to disasters is a place of overlapping need for the county and UC ANR skills. Short-term capacity building will be needed to create the backbone of response plans and get low-hanging resiliency projects complete. Medium and long-term engagement with land management groups like the Forest Service will be needed as management plans evolve. In addition, research and extension will be required to quantify the effects of local progress and disasters. Finally, training and extension will be needed to bring best practices and lessons from around the country to Del Norte. In a disaster, direct capacity building will almost always be required, and the advisor must intervene to serve the community.

Addressing OFWs will require research extension and relationship building. Engaging with local groups at their current level will be critical. Similarly, informing residents with empirical data is essential to the advisor's research and extension work.

## Food systems and agriculture

Local food distribution, procurement, and food system resilience, are two fields that the CEDS has identified to improve economic development and disaster resilience. The county has many vital food system NGOs working to this end. While Del Norte produces meat and seafood, no meat or seafood processing is available locally. The DNATL Community Food Council Sea to Market Program is close to bringing a fish filleting station to the harbor to allow fishermen to process seafood. Because of the high value of processing relative to primary production or catch, this is a step toward keeping profits local. Currently, the largest (and only) food processing operation of notable scale is the Rumiano Cheese plant in Crescent City.

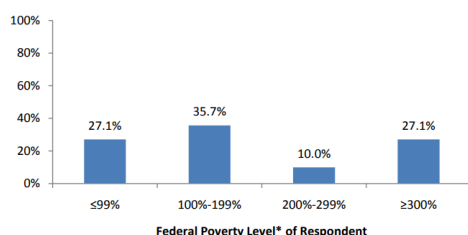
### Meeting the needs of Del Norte's food system

Clientele in this area are already working with UCCE and are incredibly advanced. The advisor should continue to support their efforts and provide value through economic impact research and extension, emphasizing how to incorporate an economic impact point of view into their food systems work.

## Spotlight on Klamath

Klamath, California, sits near the mouth of the Klamath River and houses the offices of the Yurok Tribal Government. A 2006 survey by CCRP found that (78.2%) of residents self-identified as white and (11.5%) as Native American with a mean age of 56. (14) 62.9% of respondents were low income,  $\leq 200\%$  Federal Poverty Level. 13.8% percent of respondents were disabled, and 8.8% were unemployed. (14)

Exhibit 3: Poverty Level of Respondents (n=70)



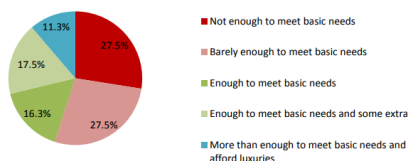
Source: Rural Health Information Survey, 2006, California Center for Rural Policy

\* The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) varies by household size. For a family of four (two adults, two children) the 2006 Federal Poverty Level (100% FPL) was \$20,444, 200% FPL was \$40,888 and 300% FPL was \$61,332

Figure 9: Poverty Level of Respondents to CCRPs 2006 Survey: CCRP

Of the respondents, 39.5% had a High School degree or less educational attainment. (1) One in four respondents reported having mold issues in their housing, and 50% did not have internet. (14) 31.9 % of respondents were unable to get needed healthcare in the prior year, and, of the families with children, 26.7% were unable to get needed pediatric care. (14) The survey indicates that lack of doctors and costs associated with care/transport are the most mentioned barriers to medical care. (14)

Exhibit 15: Perceptions about Household Income (n =80)



Source: Rural Health Information Survey, 2006, California Center for Rural Policy  
 Notes: This analysis was for the question, "How do you feel about your household's total income per year?" Basic needs were defined as housing, heat, food, clothing, and transportation.

Figure 10: Perceptions of Household Incomes in Klamath: CCRP

## Meeting the needs of Klamath, CA

To serve Klamath, the advisor must form strong relationships with local leaders, the Yurok Tribal Government, and their agencies, especially the Yurok Economic Development Corporation. Short-term, focused relationship/trust building is needed.

## Political Capital

The three main elected bodies in Del Norte are the Board of Supervisors, the Crescent City Council, and the Crescent City Harbor District. The county supervisors are very active with Rural County Representatives of California, RCRC; this organization is an asset to Del Norte and the North Coast. The Coastal Commission is often mentioned as a stumbling block for the region. (1)

Del Norte has a much higher percentage of registered Republican voters and a smaller percentage of registered Democrats than California. (15) Del Norte comprises a small part of its state and federal representative districts. Despite its smaller size, the county has had success working with state government officials on topics like the emergency declaration for the Smith River Complex fires.

Perhaps the most famous political group in the area is the State of Jefferson. This is a state secessionist movement aiming to create a new state out of northern California and southern Oregon (16). The prevalence of pro-Jeffersonian politics may explain the very high 5% of registered American Independents.

## Cultural Capital

The tribal nations of Del Norte give the region a unique culture; their many public and cultural preservation events are assets to the community. The Yurok have language programs in school, and multiple high schoolers have earned awards for bilingual education in Yurok. (3) The fishing industry has also created a culture for the region, and the fishing fleet is often seen as a Del Norte staple. Additionally, Del Norte has a surprisingly lively art scene.

### Meeting the needs of Del Norte's cultural capital development

Because arts and culture are important to the young professional class that the region seeks to attract, supporting cultural and artistic development is critical to the advisor's role. Rural communities across the US are examining this attraction and retention strategy; thus, research from Del Norte on the effectiveness and impacts of projects will help advance our understanding of the topic.

## Financial capital

Del Norte encompasses many federal land holdings not subject to property tax, significantly reducing a potential, significant source of revenue for the county. (1) Navigating this loss and the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) programs are of crucial importance to Del Norte County's ability to raise funds. In a county with such a large tourism sector, TLT is a crucial revenue generator that does not directly tax residents and is regularly a topic of discussion. Del Norters' relatively low income, lower in Crescent City, and the prevalence of mobile homes limit tax revenue.

Based on interviews, government staff, and non-profits clearly feel they are on the grants treadmill, spending too much time applying and administering grants, as grants are seen as the only viable funding source. Increasing capital mobility makes access to capital increasingly important to rural communities. (17)

### Meeting the financial capital development needs of Del Norte

Research into innovative funding methods for community and economic development projects is needed to diversify funding streams from grants alone. Extending this information to the Del Norte community and beyond will also be needed with varied methods. This need has shown up across the state, with other CED advisors reporting similar issues. The CEDLab is well-positioned to multiply the advisor's efforts to escape the grant treadmill.



## Natural Capital, where the tallest trees in the world meet the coast

Del Norte is a place of immense natural beauty with a rugged coastline, Redwood National and State Parks, the Smith River, and the Siskiyou Mountains. This natural beauty drives much of the tourism to the area and is accessed by numerous hiking trails. The climate close to the coast is conducive to raising livestock. The ocean has productive fishing and strong, sustained winds. The rugged Siskiyou mountains make it hard to access or build infrastructure in the county's interior.

## Human Capital

A CCRP report found a 75% four-year high school graduation rate, just above California's rate, with Native American students having the lowest rate, <60%. (10) Troublingly, 64% of High School students want to attend college, but only 36% think they will be able to attend college. (10) The pie chart below shows Del Norte residents' highest educational attainment. 62% of Del Norte residents have a high school diploma or less. (3) With living wage job growth, primarily in fields requiring some training or education beyond high school, Del Norte will need workforce training and education support. (18)

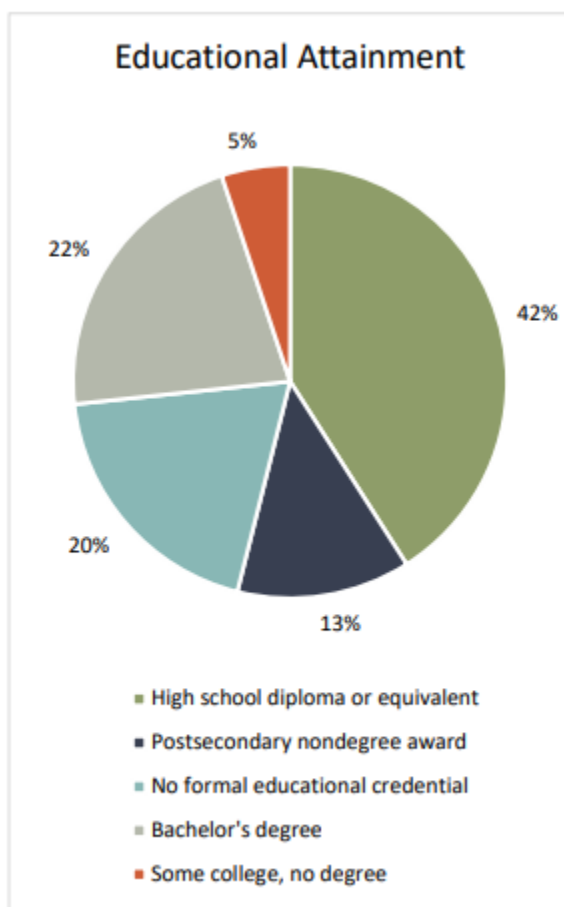


Figure 11: Del Norte Residents' educational attainment: NoRTEC

The Redwood Coast is experiencing a brain and youth drain as residents leave the area for in-person or advanced training, education, or higher-paying jobs (1,19). This is robbing the area of its youth and its stock of professional-class workers. Clientele reported youth leaving for jobs, education, and greater social activities. Interestingly, many interviewees have left as youth and returned closer to middle age, some repeating the leave-return cycle multiple times. Youth flight creates a self-reinforcing spiral and is a serious concern for Del Norte residents.

Del Norte has experienced population aging and decline due to low birth rates and outmigration. (8) The population has declined 4.2% from 2020 to 2023. (2) The median age has increased steadily since 2018, with the current median age being 40. (20) An aging population can present issues, such as more significant medical needs in an area already starved for medical care and worker shortages as the population transitions to retirement.

**Table 7: Population Projections by Age Group, Del Norte County, 2020-2030**

Age Group	2019	2030	Percent Change
0-17	5,642	5,499	-2.5%
18-24	2,769	2,772	0.1%
25-34	3,728	4,422	18.6%
35-54	6,325	6,560	3.7%
55-64	3,753	2,340	-37.6%
65-74	2,917	3,129	7.3%
75+	2,168	3,107	43.3%
Total	27,302	27,829	1.9%

Source: CA Department of Finance. P2 Projections Series.

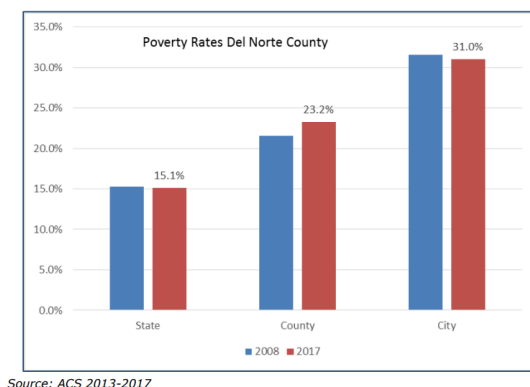
Figure 12: Population Projections by Age Group, Del Norte County, 2020-2030: Del Norte CEDS

Del Norte has a profound lack of medical care; in 2005 alone, the county lost 25% of its physicians. (21) The patient to primary care physician in Del Norte has increased from 1,312:1 in 2011 to 1,620:1, both of which are higher than the California average. (22) Lack of medical care is a quality of life issue that hampers attracting and retaining residents, most notably among professional class workers with greater mobility and choice of where to locate. (23)

Del Norte has among the highest rates of food insecurity, poverty, and childhood obesity in California. (24) Del Norte residents live three years less than the California average. (3) Del Norte has the 2nd highest youth disconnection rate ( rate of 16-24-year-olds who are not working or in school) of any county in California at 32.3%. (3) 1 in 3 youths are neither in school nor working compared to just over 1 in 10

statewide. (3) The chart below shows the prevalence of poverty in Del Norte and its increasing nature and inverse movement in relation to the state. (1)

**Figure 13: Poverty Rates in Del Norte County, Crescent City Compared to California**



**Figure 13: Poverty Rates in Del Norte County, Crescent City, and California: Del Norte CEDS**

Small business development is an opportunity designated in the CEDs with which UC ANR has experience and could be a natural place for service. (1) In an interview with the local College of the Redwoods, there was a need for entrepreneurship/small business education and development for students.

A 2010 rural economic development literature review by Ryser and Halseth points to a gap in research around how labor-saving technology and a more flexible labor force affect the rural labor market. (17) O'Hagan and Cecil point to a shift toward a "knowledge economy" as a driver for economic diversification away from one primary industry, such as logging or fishing. (25) They call out the decline of high-paying nonspecialized jobs in these fields as industries become more capital-intensive, with jobs requiring greater education and specialization. (25) Because of this, there is an increased need for workforce upskilling and training. Distance education and accessible education are crucial to avoid further population loss as workers move for job training. Ohan's study also points out the advantage urban areas have in the knowledge economy and that rural areas will need different strategies. (25) This region boasts Cal Poly Humboldt in Arcata and College of the Redwoods as the sole four-year and community colleges.

Homelessness is a persistent problem in Del Norte, with it often being mentioned in stakeholder interviews and secondary research. There are very few services for the homeless in Del Norte, but some progress from Mission Possible has occurred. Homelessness results from multiple factors, among which is a mismatch between income and housing costs. (25) With Del Norte's limited housing stock, lack of multi-family units, low median incomes, work seasonality, and a high percentage of residents rent-burdened, it should not be surprising that this issue rears its head so

violently in Del Norte. Homelessness costs the local government money directly with increased medical, fire, and law enforcement responses, combined with encampment cleaning and abatement costs. (26,27)

Interviewees mentioned many of the indirect costs to the local economy, including increased long-term medical costs and creating an environment in perception or fact of undesirability or lack of safety for tourists or potential future residents. The latter diminishes the amount of time tourists stay in Del Norte, especially Crescent City, and reduces the number of people interested in moving to the area.

Capacity building was the number one need mentioned by clientele in interviews. Interviewees working in economic development felt there was a lack of staff knowledge and time. Interviewees reported being stuck on a grant treadmill and “only having time to put out fires” instead of focusing on new economic development. Sometimes, this lack of capacity is filled with consultants, which is often expensive; alternatively, it takes the form of opportunities slipping by because there is no one to do the needed work. Many economic development staff come from other backgrounds, and their position is only partly in economic development. The interviewee’s and the advisor’s observations show a strong need for accessible, easy-to-digest training on various economic development essentials.

Many interviewees mentioned local staffing shortages. These shortages point to a lack of staffing supply and price inelastic demand. Employers are unable to find candidates to fill positions and often cannot, or will not, raise salaries to attract or retain workers. Clientele are looking for assistance either through direct capacity building, training to upskill current staff, or help with attraction and retention best practices.

## Minorities in the Redwood Coast

A 2008 interview survey by CCRP found that 67% of the respondents reported that Latino’s health needs were not getting met in their community. (21) Economics was the second most important factor affecting Latino health, and affordability was the number-one reason for choosing the medical care facilities they did. (21) Respondents identified community groups, popular meeting places, and churches as places to engage Latinos further. (21) This will guide how I structure engagement on potential projects aimed at the Latino community. Bilingual services were found to be a high priority; thus, producing public-facing documents in Spanish will be key to meaningfully engaging this community.

Inside the county’s boundaries reside 4 Federally recognized tribal nations: Yurok Tribe, Tolowa Dee-Ni’ Nation, Elk Valley Rancheria, and Resighini Rancheria. The tribes operate different enterprises, from casinos to hotels and gas stations. The CEDS reports tribal businesses as the third largest industry cluster by employment if treated as a cluster. (1) In the 2020 census, there were approximately 2434 self-reported Native Americans and 1411 self-reported Native Americans plus another race. (23)

Furthermore, the Yurok tribe is the largest Federally recognized Tribe in California. The life expectancy for Native American men in Del Norte is 72.1-73 years and 71.4 for women. (3) This is the lowest of any county's major ethnic or racial groups. (3) The 2014-2020 Census found that Native Americans had an educational index of 3.12 out of 10, about the same as Latinos. (3)

To effectively serve the region, the advisor will need to engage with Tribal nations and residents. This engagement will require the advisor's trust-building efforts through capacity building and assistance to tribal economic development organizations or departments.

The 2023 Census population estimate for Del Norte County reports Black or African American as 3.2% of the population and Asian as 3.5% of the population. (2) Because of the small size of these populations, little data is available on them; see their omission in Spotlight on Del Norte's HDI. The data available, although flagged as having higher unreliability, shows Asians high on the HDI educational attainment index and Blacks below Asians and Whites. (3) Del Norte is home to a Hmong community with some monolingual Hmong speakers who will have unique engagement challenges the advisor must overcome. To gain an understanding of these populations, ground truthing will be needed from the advisor.

## Meeting the human capital development needs of Del Norte

Workforce development is likely the highest priority in the county because of its relation to the low-income problem and the problem of the lack of professional class workers. Del Norte does not have a workforce development board or an overarching workforce development planning and implementation organization. Supporting workforce development based on community assets and current levels of workforce skills will maximize the advisor's work in this field. In the short term, there is a need for research and extension around what precisely the workforce development citation is in Del Norte and where gains can most effectively be made. Medium-term capacity building and technical assistance around workforce development strategies are needed. In the long term, the needs focus on "growing our own" and supporting research from groups like Del Norte Unified School District to supply Del Norte's workforce. These long-term needs will also require support for the nonworkforce training elements that attract and retain workers. Lastly, these proposed needs will be identified through research, and the results will be extended to the community.

Small business development has short-term needs related to making connections with external groups to provide content and longer-term needs related to training that is more locally applicable to Del Norte.

The advisor can meet the needs of addressing homelessness through research into the actual costs of homelessness to Del Norte. Extension is also needed to inform the public and policymakers about best practices from places making headway on the homeless issue.

# Key CED Stakeholder groups

## Economic Development

- Del Norte Economic Development Corporation
- Tri-Agency for Economic Development
- City Staff focused on Economic Development
- Yurok Economic Development Corporation
- Del Norte Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Bureau

## Workforce Development and Education

- Del Norte Unified School District
- College of the Redwoods Del Norte
- Smart Workforce Center
- Cal-Poly Humboldt (CCRP particularly)

## Ag, Fishing, and Logging

- Alexander Dairy
- Ocean Air Farms
- Green Diamond Resource Company
- Fishing Charters - Stella's Adventure
- North Coast Growers Association
- Del Norte and Tribal Lands Food Policy Council

## Local Government

- County Government
- Crescent City Government
- Harbor District
- Tribal Governments (Yurok, Tolowa Dee-ni, Resighini, Elk Valley)
- Del Norte Ag. Department
- Healthcare District
- Redwood National and State Parks
  - Redwood Parks Conservancy
- US Forest Service

## Cultural and Social Leaders

- Del Norte Association For Cultural Awareness (DNACA)
- True North Organizing Network
- Del Norte Resilient Energy Committee

## Medical and Community Services

- Sutter Coast Hospital
- Open Door Clinic
- Del Norte Mission Possible
- Family Resource Center of the Redwoods
- Mission Possible Del Norte

- Rural Human Services

#### Infrastructure

- Hambro WSG / Recology Del Norte / Solid Waste Management District
- Crescent City Airport

#### Businesses or Nonprofits

- Redwood Rides
- Crescent Rides
- Trees Of Mystery
- Del Norte Trail Alliance
- Humboldt Area Foundation / Wild Rivers Community Foundation

### Fitting into the puzzle, what have other designated as goals

With limited capacity, teamwork is critical. What are the relevant recommendations or goals I can help support?

#### Community Vital Signs CCRP

- “Increase High School competition in 4 years and decrease the difference between those who want to go to college and those who can.”
  - The school district is experiencing staffing shortages, which could contribute to these issues; supporting workforce development and studying strategies for employee attraction and retention will support this goal.
  - Working with CR and other institutions for college pathway programs can support local students and likely lift the education attainment in DNATL.

#### The Workforce Collaborative of the Redwood Coast Strategic Work Plan for Education Needs, Health Information Technology, Recruitment and Retention for the Diversified Healthcare Industry Cluster and the Del Norte County Health Care Provider Recruiting and Retention Plan

- “Building a local pipeline of workers to address allied health workforce shortages.”
  - Support CR and Cal Poly Humboldt with their local medical professional education programs. This could be done through economic analysis to demonstrate need/value or studies of the current workforce or predicted workforce need.
- “Attraction and long-term retention of medical professionals from out of the area “
  - Emphasizing the community in CED is vital in supporting this effort.

#### Assessment of Research Needs In Rural California

- “Support Rural Research”
  - My research and creative activity will support this recommendation from the CCRP report. The report also notes the importance of this research’s



data being accessible, so publicly hosting and using extension methods to spread my findings will be essential.

#### Del Norte Regional Transportation Plan

- “Goal 4: Provide a safe, convenient, and efficient multi-modal transportation system that is part of a balanced overall transportation system.”
  - This goal can be served by supporting the economic development of outdoor recreation, such as bike infrastructure and trails. Since this multi-modal system would likely tie into Humboldt County, as Redwood Coast Transit does, the advisor's multi-county appointment positions me well to work in both counties.
- “Goal 5: Promote alternative transportation.”
  - Biking is a growing form of outdoor recreation and a green alternative transit method. Supporting outdoor recreation economic development projects that include biking and examining models such as Zion National Park’s bus model will support this goal.
- “Goal 11: Include climate change strategies in transportation investment decisions.”
  - With my colleague's skills and my existing involvement, I will likely contribute to this goal by helping to make infrastructure resilient to wildfires.

#### Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (TEAMS):

##### T-Transportation, Tech, and Tourism

##### E- Education and Environment

##### A- Ag, including forestry and fishing

##### M- Manufacturing and Medicine

##### S- Small Business Development and Sovereign Nation success.

**Table 2: Summary of Goals from 2020 CEDS**

GOALS	GOAL 1: DIVERSITY	GOAL 2: TOURISM	GOAL 3: AGRICULTURE	GOAL 4: TRANSPORTATION	GOAL 5: EDUCATION	GOAL 6: SMALL BUSINESS
ACTION STEPS	1. Attract internet commuters 2. Stimulate the creation of sustainable energy enterprises 3. Expand specialty health care services 4. Coordinate with Tribal leaders re: infrastructure 5. Promote quality of life to attract businesses	1. Evaluate Tourism Business Improvement District 2. Consider increasing TOT tax rate 3. Increase # of outdoor events 4. Promote scenic assets 5. Promote Sister City relationship 6. Coordinate with Tribes re: tourism attraction	1. Promote food-related programs 2. Assist ag producers to improve sustainability 3. Study ultra high temperature dairy processing 4. Promote new food product manufacturing 5. Complete Harbor sea wall 6. Support sustainable forestry	1. Complete Last Chance Grade project 2. Improve bridges for STAA trucks 3. Seek funding to expand transit 4. Promote and expand airline service 5. Implement Harbor District projects	1. Support K-12 Career Tech Ed 2. Attract/develop vocational ed programs 3. Attract higher ed institutions 4. Adopt a "health in all policies" approach to econ dev 5. Prepare marketing materials to attract developers 6. Increase housing production 7. Address homelessness 8. Disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts	1. Support expansion of SBDC services 2. Entrepreneurship networking system 3. Improve attractiveness of Downtown Crescent City 4. Prioritize support for local merchants 5. Promote econ dev successes

Figure 14: Summary of CEDS Goal: Crescent City EDSAP

(EDSAP and CEDS Goals)

- “Goal 1 Economic Diversity”
  - Support local workforce development and retention efforts with technical assistance and economic analysis.
  - Work with community groups interested in sustainable energy and harnessing maximum benefits from potential OFWs.
  - Quality of life improvements may be outside of UC ANR’s “bread and butter,” but supporting my clientele who work in this space will be vital to attracting and retaining the workforce Del Norte needs to be economically successful.
- “Goal 2: Promote successful tourism industry expansion.”
  - With UC ANR more fully entering this space, institutional knowledge and support are beginning to overlap with Del Norte’s needs. Outdoor recreation is an opportunity to use resources unconventionally.
- “Goal 3: Support expansion of sustainable agricultural, forestry and fishery products.”
  - My work will support the business side of natural resource management and agriculture. Supporting our innovative growers and processors aligns with local government goals and UC ANR’s expertise and goals.
- “Goal 4: Invest in improving and maintaining a comprehensive transportation network that meets the needs of local industry, commuters, and visitors.”
  - The harbor and airport are assets to the county that the advisor can support with economic analysis and technical assistance as appropriate. With the advisor’s multi-county appointment, he is well-positioned to work across county lines on transportation issues.
- “Goal 5: Enhance education, workforce training, housing, and healthy lifestyle opportunities in the County to support existing residents and businesses as well as the workforce of the future.”
  - This goal contains some of Del Norte’s most pressing needs. Supporting clientele in workforce development and housing is an obvious route to economic development.
- “Goal 6: Create a thriving small business environment which fosters entrepreneurship and innovation.”
  - With UC ANR’s skills around small agribusiness development plugging into small business development, it is a place to intervene for success. Working in Humboldt, the advisor can work closely with the North Coast SBDC, which covers Del Norte and Humboldt.



# Interpretation

With analysis of the secondary data and interview responses, a few key themes emerge, and methods of addressing them through applied research and extension. These fit well into the advisor's programmatic themes and are organized that way.

## **1. Inform productive uses of natural resources for economic growth that deliver tangible benefits to all community members for multiple generations.**

- OFW navigation and community benefit
  - This is supported by research into OFW impacts and extension education to inform the community about how to engage with developers and the federal government to secure the maximum community benefit and mitigate negative effects.
- Tourism as Natural Resources Utilization
  - Supporting this need will consist of capacity building, connecting with other recreation communities, and extending the strategies of thriving communities.

## **2. Assist and educate clientele in business structures and planning, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and infrastructure to support these.**

- Workforce development, living wage job creation, attraction and retention.
  - This is supported by research into the current state of the Del Norte workforce and labor markets and what attracts professionals to the region. Extension education will also provide examples of successful strategies.
- Support key industries (especially natural resources), small businesses, and diversification.
  - This will take the form of research into industries' actual economic impacts and growth potentials, developing relationships between groups regionally, and direct capacity building on projects and strategies.

## **3. Develop, advance, and educate my clientele on economic development strategies and economic impact evaluation methods.**

- Housing shortage and economic development.
  - Addressing this will require the advisor to be a sorting funnel, finding, synthesizing, condensing, and presenting what has worked in other areas.
- Economic impact analysis
  - How do we know if it worked or will work? We conduct economic analysis of the impacts of decisions. Clientele education and capacity building to get the ball rolling will support this. Education needs to meet the clientele where they are at.

## **4. Support the development of community infrastructure resilient to physical disasters and economic shocks.**

- Physical and organizational resilience of infrastructure.
  - Broad topics require broad solutions; therefore, research around costs of nonresilient infrastructure, clientele education (focused on best practices and building relationships), and direct capacity building on projects are needed.

## **5. Statewide CED network**

- Grant treadmill

- As other CEDLab members have this issue, engaging with them for combined research and extension will be fruitful.

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