

STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

The Role of Counties in Economic Development



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ALAMEDA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Economic Development for Social Justice



Alameda County, Calif., is a place of great economic prosperity but also of contrasts in economic outcomes. The economy of this large county is part of the interconnected and large Bay Area region of California. Driven by the Silicon Valley software and technology firms, the region's economy — \$364 billion gross product in 2013—stands eighth largest among U.S. metropolitan areas and 41st in the world, if the Bay Area were its own country. This prosperity has not spread equally across Alameda County. For example, one of the cities in the county — Oakland — has nearly 20 percent of its families living in poverty. To address this challenge, the county runs programs initiated by the Alameda County Administrator and Auditor-Controller offices to help minority youths and local small and minority-owned businesses become more self-sufficient. In addition, East Bay Economic Development Alliance (EDA) — a two-county regional public-private partnership organization working within Alameda County government —created initiatives to expand broadband access across the county and help low-income residents gain employment.

Alameda County supports initiatives to improve economic outcomes through county agencies and departments, as well as through the EDA. A five member Board of Supervisors governs the Alameda County government, consisting of more than 9,000 employees working for 21 different agencies and

departments. While the county departments support some economic development efforts, the majority of these efforts occur within the EDA. Founded in 1990, the EDA is a regional economic development group, with members from government, business, university and nonprofit leaders from Alameda County and neighboring Contra Costa County. Alameda County plays a leading role in the organization, with representatives on the EDA's Executive

Committee including one County Supervisor, four representatives from the Alameda County Mayors' Conference, the County Administrator, a representative from the Alameda County City Managers' Association and a county economic development director. In addition, the EDA is housed in Alameda County government offices. Alameda County acts as an issuer of industrial development bonds, which are processed through the EDA. These bonds provide financing for businesses and serve as an incentive for business attraction and expansion, resulting in the creation of new, sustainable jobs for Alameda County residents.

- **Population, 2013: 1.6 million**
- **County Board size: 5**
- **County Administrator**

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New Beginnings Initiative

A project of the Alameda County Administrator's Office, New Beginnings provides job skills, arts education and employment for at-risk youth. County Administrator, Susan S. Muranishi initiated the program in 2007 and serves as the chairperson of the New Beginnings Advisory Committee. The initiative uses partnerships with the private sector and the Alameda County government departments to offer programs that give employment experiences to at-risk youths who might otherwise face difficulties in the workforce.

Emancipated foster children can apply for New Beginnings Fellowship Program that offers paired mentoring and project management experience within Alameda County's government. In another program, called Fresh Start Café, enrollees gain work experience by operating cafes at county facilities such as libraries, offices, juvenile detention facilities and youth centers.



Youth participating in the New Beginnings program, which provides job skills, art education and employment for at-risk youth.

The Small, Local and Emerging Businesses (SLEB) Program

The Auditor-Controller's office and the General Services Agency administer the Small, Local, and Emerging Businesses (SLEB) program to provide opportunities for local small and minority-owned businesses. The program assists and expands opportunities for local and minority-owned businesses to compete for and be awarded county vendor and service contracts. Registered subcontractors receive a 5 to 10 percent bid preference on county contracts under \$500,000. Between July 2009 and January 2014, SLEB clients received nearly \$250 million in county contracts, amounting to over half of Alameda County's total procurement expenditures.

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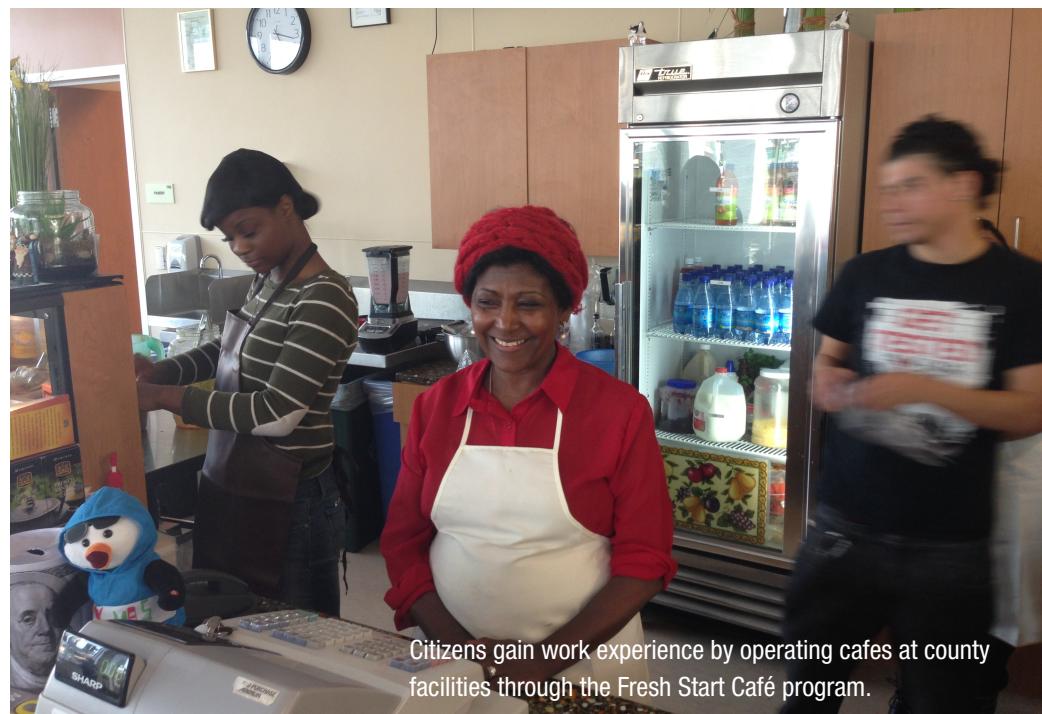
The East Bay Broadband Consortium (EBBC)

Alameda County officials draw on the EDA funds to connect their underserved populations with emerging technologies. In 2012, representatives from Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties formed the East Bay Broadband Consortium (EBBC), a grant-funded initiative to bridge gaps in broadband access. County officials shaped the EBBC's strategic plan, which is a three year work plan targeting broadband deployment, access, and adoption improvements in healthcare, workforce services and education. In 2013 Alameda County donated 500 recycled computers to community-based organizations and career centers and provided education notices on broadband to clients. The contribution and accompanying training ensure that these organizations have the equipment necessary to capitalize on regional broadband when implementation of the EBBC's strategic plan begins in 2014.

Improving Outcomes in the State CalWORKs Programs

Alameda County and the EDA are also working to improve outcomes in the state CalWORKs—California's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) welfare program. Alameda County has the highest percentage of residents enrolled in CalWORKs in the Bay Area. Four county officials serve on the EDA's executive committee. The EDA promotes county hiring incentives with the business community, to encourage local companies to hire CalWORKs clients. These agreements are tailored to the firms' needs. Businesses throughout the county have taken advantage of wage subsidies, on the job training reimbursements and training funding through the county's Social Services Agency Workforce Investment Board programs.

Alameda County benefits from its position within the Bay Area, deriving prosperity from the region's strong technology sector. The county has undertaken initiatives to improve economic development for all its residents. Through workforce development, procurement initiatives and broadband access, the county, along with the EDA, works to ensure that challenged populations gain from the region's prosperity.



Citizens gain work experience by operating cafes at county facilities through the Fresh Start Café program.

