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Climate Response Market Opportunity for Worker Cooperative Development in the Central Coast

A review of Climate Action Plans and Economic Development Plans in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito Counties

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INTRODUCTION

The state of California has set ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Senate Bill 32 (SB 32), passed in 2016, mandates a 40% reduction in GHG emissions below 1990 levels by 2030. This legislation recognizes the urgency of addressing climate change and aims to accelerate efforts to mitigate its impacts. Furthermore, in September 2022, Assembly Bill 1279 (AB 1279) was signed into law. This bill establishes an even more ambitious goal for California, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2045.

Carbon neutrality means achieving a balance between GHG emissions and the removal of those emissions from the atmosphere, effectively resulting in no net increase in emissions. These legislative actions reflect California's commitment to combating climate change and align with global efforts to limit global warming. The state has been at the forefront of implementing policies and regulations to reduce emissions and promote clean energy and sustainable practices across various sectors.

By setting these targets, California aims to drive innovation, encourage the deployment of renewable energy, promote energy efficiency, and foster the development of sustainable technologies. Achieving these goals will require collaborative efforts from businesses, organizations, and individuals throughout the state to transition to a low-carbon economy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

This report provides an overview of the market landscape, potential sectors for investment, key stakeholders, and collaboration opportunities within these counties.

METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted from January 2023 to June 2023 and consisted evaluating Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties. The research process involved investigating each individual county and designated cities to determine if they had documented or published Climate Action Plans and Economic Development Plans. This investigation aimed to gather information on specific actions and strategies outlined in these plans that could provide potential opportunities for a cooperative. By reviewing and noting the relevant information, areas of alignment and potential collaboration between the Ventures and municipal agencies were identified.

In addition to the analysis of Climate Action Plans and Economic Development plans, engaging with various stakeholders was also an important part of the research process. By interviewing stakeholders whose work intersects with climate action measures, the researcher was able to gather diverse perspectives and insights. These stakeholders included representatives from local government agencies, environmental organizations, businesses, academic institutions, and community groups. These interviews helped to capture information about ongoing climate action efforts, challenges, and opportunities within the region.

By combining the information obtained from the investigation of municipal plans and stakeholder interviews, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the local climate action landscape, economic development priorities, and potential areas for collaboration. This integrated approach ensured that the analysis and recommendations were informed by the formalized plans and the perspectives of key stakeholders in the region.

SOURCES

Climate Action Plans

Climate action plans are comprehensive roadmaps that outline the specific activities that an agency will undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate action plans build upon the information gathered by greenhouse gas inventories and generally focus on those activities that can achieve the relatively greatest emission reductions in the most cost effective manner.

The plan may encompass areas such as energy, transportation, waste management, land use, and community engagement. It provides a framework for monitoring progress, ensuring accountability, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. The ultimate objective is to mitigate climate change impacts and transition towards a sustainable, low-carbon future.

There were two counties that had published county action plans and nine cities published action plans reviewed in Monterey County, Santa Cruz County and San Benito County.

CENTRAL COAST CLIMATE ACTION PLANS REVIEWED

	CITY	Published Climate Action Plan	No Published Climate Action Plan
Monterey County	Carmel By the Sea	✔	
	Del Rey Oaks		✔
	Gonzales	✔	
	Greenfield		✔
	King City		✔
	Marina	✔	
	Monterey	✔	
	Pacific Grove	✔	
	Salinas		✔
	Seaside		✔
	Soledad		✔
Santa Cruz County	Capitola	✔	
	Santa Cruz	✔	
	Scotts Valley		✔
	Watsonville	✔	
San Benito County	There was no published county climate action plan, nor any published city climate action plans for the targeted cities of Aromas, Ridgemark, San Juan Bautista, Tres Pinos and Hollister. The General Plan for San Benito County was reviewed for climate remediation measures.		

CLIMATE ACTION MEASURES IN THE COUNTIES OF...

	MONTEREY CO.	SANTA CRUZ CO.	SAN BENITO CO.
Electrification new construction	✔	✔	✔
Electrification retrofitting existing buildings	✔	✔	✔
Installation of solar panels & battery storage	✔	✔	✔
Electrification county/city fleet vehicles & gas powered tools	✔	✔	✔
Installation of EV charging stations	✔	✔	
Water reuse methods	✔	✔	✔
Storm water capture	✔	✔	✔
Drought resistant landscape and restoration of habitat	✔	✔	✔
Solid waste, green waste	✔	✔	✔
Monterey County noted Beach and Dune Preservations in their climate action plans			

CLIMATE ACTION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTIES OF MONTEREY, SANTA CRUZ & SAN BENITO

Electrification

All three counties have their top priority of decarbonization through electrification. The primary focus is on building electrification and transportation electrification.

Each county is taking aggressive measures to electrify existing buildings, including residential homes, and non-residential buildings, municipal buildings, commercial buildings, and even agricultural environments. Also, each county has required green new building requirements for new constructions. This includes installation of solar panels and battery storage, retrofitting of lighting, heating, plumbing, cool roofs, upgrades in insulation for decarbonization measures. The measures also include incentivizing conversions to county residents by offering energy rebates.

All three counties are targeting electrification of transportation by converting all municipal vehicles from fossil fuel to electric vehicles. They are also offering rebates to residents to buy and use electric or hybrid cars. Each county is in the process of installing electrical vehicle charging stations throughout each respective region.

Other transportation measures encourage less vehicle miles traveled by allowing for more remote work opportunities in each county and promoting public transportation, ride sharing and bicycling. Additional infrastructure such as bike signals, crossings, loop detectors, are needed, depending on the number and type of facilities installed.

A noteworthy commonality is that all three counties have mentioned that partnering with Central Coast Community Energy (CCCE) is required to achieve electrification measures.

Water

Another key area of climate remediation in the counties is centered around water resource protection. All three counties focus on recycling and reuse of water through the development of advanced wastewater treatment technologies and regulations. This includes treating and reusing wastewater for non-potable purposes such as landscape irrigation, industrial processes, and groundwater recharge. Stormwater capture and recharge and building watersheds are being utilized in the three counties.

Water-drought resistant landscaping replacement is a priority. The use of native and drought-tolerant plants, smart irrigation systems, and landscape design that minimizes water consumption. These practices help reduce water demand for outdoor purposes.

Solid & Green Waste

The counties are all utilizing ways to convert solid and green waste to energy projects, including biomass and biofuels, as an alternative energy source. Recycling and reducing landfill waste, including grasscycling, backyard and on-site composting/mulching, and curbside recycling are practices currently in place in the three counties.

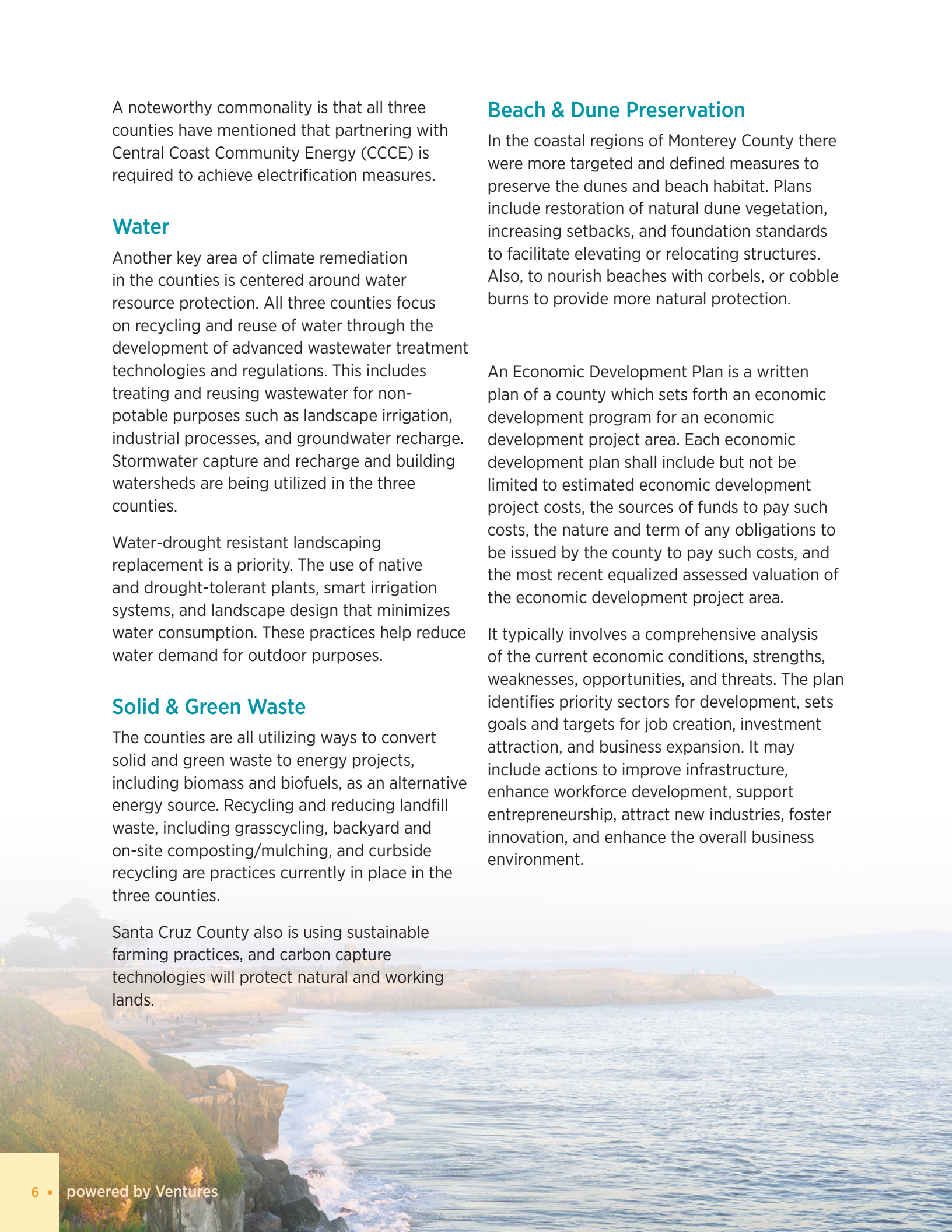
Santa Cruz County also is using sustainable farming practices, and carbon capture technologies will protect natural and working lands.

Beach & Dune Preservation

In the coastal regions of Monterey County there were more targeted and defined measures to preserve the dunes and beach habitat. Plans include restoration of natural dune vegetation, increasing setbacks, and foundation standards to facilitate elevating or relocating structures. Also, to nourish beaches with corbels, or cobble burns to provide more natural protection.

An Economic Development Plan is a written plan of a county which sets forth an economic development program for an economic development project area. Each economic development plan shall include but not be limited to estimated economic development project costs, the sources of funds to pay such costs, the nature and term of any obligations to be issued by the county to pay such costs, and the most recent equalized assessed valuation of the economic development project area.

It typically involves a comprehensive analysis of the current economic conditions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The plan identifies priority sectors for development, sets goals and targets for job creation, investment attraction, and business expansion. It may include actions to improve infrastructure, enhance workforce development, support entrepreneurship, attract new industries, foster innovation, and enhance the overall business environment.



Economic Development Plans

Monterey County

Monterey County has identified six goals in their focus on economic planning. The following were the objectives identified:

- Build a countywide economic development capacity.
- Build, support, and retain a robust and adaptable Monterey County workforce.
- Address housing shortage, affordability, and barriers to new development.
- Foster development of growing established and emerging clusters.
- Strengthen small business and entrepreneurship environment.
- Expand the regional broadband infrastructure.

Santa Cruz County

There were seven goals that Santa Cruz County has prioritized in their economic development in the region. They are listed below:

- Create shared vision and organize for action.
- Support sustainable development with housing in transportation choices.
- Strengthen key, economic sectors, including agriculture, health education and leisure hospitality.
- Support, small businesses, technology innovation, as well as the arts.
- Expand public sector capacity & infrastructure.
- Revitalizing strength in town centers in commercial areas.
- Promote Santa Cruz County to regional state national in global markets.

San Benito County

Eight objectives were identified after a thorough process of reviewing the economic development priorities in San Benito County. They are the following:

- Invest in job creation, local business development & attraction.
- Collaboratively foster collaboration, connectivity, and centralization of information between private and public sectors to increase competitive advantage of region.
- Invest in talent development, retention, and education.
- Improve business climate and competitiveness.
- Invest in infrastructure maintenance and growth.
- Support entrepreneurial environment and culture.
- Ensure community safety and health.
- Create economic resiliency.

* All three counties had a focus based on housing, job creation, business growth as well as maintenance and upgrading internal infrastructure measures. Many of the improvements within each county also included climate mitigation measures centered around conversion from natural gas to electricity for municipalities, residents and business.

OVERLAPPING CLIMATE ACTION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES IN THE COUNTIES OF MONTEREY, SANTA CRUZ AND SAN BENITO

	MONTEREY CO.	SANTA CRUZ CO.	SAN BENITO CO.
Solar panel and energy storage	✔	✔	✔
EV charging station installation	✔	✔	✔
Building retrofitting	✔	✔	✔
New building Green Codes	✔	✔	✔
Green technology	✔	✔	✔
Motorist, bicyclist, and pedestrian safety measures	✔	✔	✔
Water reuse	✔	✔	✔
Water capture	✔	✔	✔
Plumbing retrofitting	✔	✔	✔
Restore drain replacement/ installation	✔	✔	
Water desalinization	✔		
Habitat restoration	✔	✔	✔
Small business & coop development	✔		

In all three counties the following climate action measures are referenced in the economic development plans: electrification, water conservation, and habitat restoration measures. Here are some specific details regarding these efforts:

Electrification

Santa Cruz and Monterey County have made progress in converting natural gas to electric power for retrofitting buildings and transportation. San Benito County is also making progress in this area. The focus is on utilizing solar energy, energy storage, EV charger installation and alternative transportation options to support the transition to carbon-neutral practices.

Water Conservation

Each county has its own water conservation measures in place. These include reusing water, capturing water, and retrofitting plumbing systems in existing buildings to improve water efficiency. Santa Cruz and Monterey County are upgrading their storm and drain systems and have ongoing desalination projects to address water preservation. Infrastructure upgrades include Santa Cruz County receiving significant federal funding, such as $67 million for the Pajaro River Levees and $4.8 million for the construction of a new 2.38 million gallon reservoir. These investments aim to improve water management, reduce localized flooding, and enhance water storage capacity.

Habitat Restoration

Natural habitat restoration efforts in all three counties involve activities such as removing invasive species, creating urban forests, and converting existing landscapes to drought-resistant landscapes. Monterey County has plans for a 257-acre agriculture development complex, which may contribute to habitat restoration and sustainable agriculture practices. Santa Cruz County has secured $1.8 million in grant funding for reducing localized flooding and improving wetland habitat. Additionally, a $700,000 grant from CalFire has been allocated to building an urban forest. These grants support the restoration and conservation of natural habitats.

KEY FINDINGS

COOPERATIVE OPPORTUNITY

After researching the needs and priorities in the three counties the following worker cooperatives identified would be possible for Ventures to develop directly in each respective field. By tailoring the worker cooperatives to the specific needs and priorities of each county, Ventures can create impactful and locally relevant businesses that align with the economic and environmental goals of the respective regions.

Electrician Cooperative:
A worker cooperative in the electrical industry could offer a variety of services such as electrical installations, repairs, and maintenance. This includes installation of solar panels, battery chargers, EV charging stations, and retrofitting of light conversions. The cooperative could focus on promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy solutions, and smart home technologies.

Plumbing Cooperative:
A worker cooperative in the plumbing sector could provide services related to plumbing installations, repairs, and maintenance for residential, commercial, and industrial clients. Retrofitting of heat pumps is an important service the cooperative can provide. The cooperative could prioritize sustainable water management practices, including water conservation, leak detection, and eco-friendly plumbing solutions.

Water Technician Cooperative:
The cooperative could provide services related to water treatment, including installation, maintenance, and repair of water filtration systems for residential, commercial, and industrial clients. It could specialize in wastewater management solutions, such as the installation and maintenance of septic systems, sewage treatment plants, or decentralized wastewater treatment systems. They could also offer services related to wastewater testing, analysis, and compliance with environmental regulations. The cooperative could specialize in the design, installation, and maintenance of rainwater harvesting systems and greywater recycling systems. These systems can help capture and reuse rainwater and wastewater for various non-potable purposes, such as landscape irrigation.

Landscape Cooperative:
A worker cooperative in the landscaping field could specialize in sustainable landscaping practices, including design, installation, and maintenance of environmentally friendly landscapes. The cooperative could focus on native plantings, reforestation, water-efficient irrigation systems, and on efficient irrigation system installations, maintenance, and audits.

KEY CHALLENGES

The key challenges in forming a worker cooperative centered around the above recommended cooperatives is obtaining the necessary contractor's license to comply with state requirements and secure contracts, particularly for projects involving municipalities. Technical and industry-related practices will require additional research and consultation. Below are issues identified that Ventures will need to address to take the next steps in further planning for and developing the worker cooperative if the intent is to enter into a climate action based cooperative:

Education and Language Barriers:
Recognize that limited English language capabilities among cooperative members can be a significant challenge.

Contractor's License Requirements:
Research and understand the specific contractor's license requirements in the state of California. Identify the necessary education courses and state examination that need to be completed for obtaining a license.

Ongoing Continuing Education:
Understand the importance of ongoing continuing education to maintain a contractor's license and secure government contracts. Develop a system within the cooperative to ensure members have access to the necessary continuing education courses and resources.

Collaborative Partnerships:
Consider establishing partnerships or collaborations with trade schools, private organizations, educational institutions, or job training centers that can provide language support, educational courses, or resources tailored to the cooperative's needs.

Collaborating with Local Trade Unions:
Engage with local trade unions in each area to gain insights into the requirements and processes involved in securing government contracts centered around climate action measures. Trade unions often have established relationships with government entities and can provide valuable guidance on navigating the bidding process, meeting compliance requirements, and accessing contract opportunities.

Start Up Funds:
Capital will be needed to create the business opportunity, for funding of legal, business and technical assistance in securing enough reserves to property form the business entity. Grants, small business loans and personal investment from cooperative members may be minimal initially .

Inclusion of Undocumented Workers:
Incorporating undocumented workers into a business is a complex issue with legal, ethical, and social considerations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Ventures will need to conduct additional research and outreach into labor trade unions and organizations for guidance on industry practices and government contracts. The worker cooperative can position itself for success in obtaining contracts, particularly those involving municipalities once it is able to determine the size and scope of potential contracts.

Ventures will need to address educational requirements and challenges. Partnering with local junior colleges and the workforce development agencies in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties would be highly beneficial. By addressing language barriers, providing educational support, and recognizing the variance in reading and comprehension levels of cooperative members, Ventures can overcome these challenges, and navigate the members through the licensing process.

Ventures should consult with city and county governments, as it is a crucial step in understanding the need of job contracts, requirements, and the process for doing business with government entities.

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Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Tatianna Brennan, Director of the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience; Andy Stone, Director with the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board; and Enrique Arreola, the Deputy Director of the San Benito County HHSA Community Services & Workforce Development.

APPRECIATION

Special thanks to Research Fellow Serina Molina J. D. of Civic Spark for writing the report and her contributions to Ventures.

VENTURES

About Ventures

Ventures partners with rural Latino working-class families in California's Central Coast to implement transformational programs that activate and strengthen their economic and political power. Together, we are working towards a shared and prosperous economic future where zip code, race, gender, or immigration status do not dictate income or wealth. sccvonline.org