



WWW.WESTCENTER.ORG

CALL 707 964 7571

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185 E. Church St., Ukiah, CA 95482

HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES GROW  
ONE BUSINESS AT A TIME



# IMPACT REPORT

2020-21

YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY STARTS HERE



Funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA or HSU Sponsored Programs Foundation.



Funded in part through a Grant with the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.



## VISION

We exist to create a future in which our rural economy thrives from access to livable wage jobs, sustainable economic growth, and a high quality of life, regardless of life stage or background.

## MISSION

We educate and advocate for small business so that local entrepreneurs receive the information they need to launch and expand their business.

## VALUES

Our Values are our North Star

**INCLUSIVENESS:** We value the uniqueness of people and their perspectives. We modify our service approach to ensure clients are supported regardless of their culture, age, or gender.

**OPTIMISM:** We look at challenges from all angles, knowing we will find a positive outcome. We propose solutions to problems and actively work toward them with the confidence that they will be achieved.

**RESPECT:** We treat each individual with high regard, appreciation, and courtesy. We honor the contributions of individuals. We seek open communication with our clients, our community, and each other.

**COLLABORATION:** We work together sharing time, resources, and abilities of one another while working toward common goals.

**INTEGRITY:** Our integrity is demonstrated when we do what we say we will do and complete tasks on schedule. Growth comes from acknowledging and learning from our mistakes.

# THE JOURNEY BEGINS



MARY ANNE PETRILLO, CEO

There is no doubt that the past two years have challenged us all to adapt our lifestyles as well as our business models to meet the “new normal.” On March 17, 2020, as the nation began to shut down, we transitioned our team to be completely virtual and fully operational within 48 hours. We found ourselves at the tip of the economic crisis that was soon to descend and the entire team rose to meet this moment head-on.

Our daily engagement with entrepreneurs has shown us that many are living a life driven more by fortitude than by fear. Their tenacity in the face of the unknown gives us, the West Center team, the strength to help them in every way we can. In 2021 alone, West Center served 626 clients through direct counseling, helped 82 businesses receive \$11.5 million in grants and loans, delivered 104 workshops to 2,617 attendees, and assisted 23 new business start-ups.

What has emerged from the experience of the past two years is the knowledge that our work as a small business development specialist is more important than ever.

Our StartUp Mendocino program was postponed following a highly successful first year in 2019. The break gave us time to re-envision the course, which launched in January 2022 as the county's only business accelerator program. With a focus on collaboration over competition, 13 emerging entrepreneurs participated in a specially designed curriculum. They now move forward with new tools to make their businesses more efficient, effective, productive, and profitable, as well as a peer-to-peer network that will help them on their entrepreneurial journey.

In 2021, we focused on expanding services to the county's growing Latino business population. We launched Centro Latino West, a new identity for our Spanish language business program, with Spanish

language videos and social media outreach and in 2022 will open a Dream Fund training program for Spanish speakers. Our advising team now includes three bilingual advisors.

Our new website is live! The site now provides users with a clear path to advising appointments, easy sign-up for trainings, and access to local business—essential services in the “new normal.”

The pandemic served to highlight the failings in our rural infrastructure, especially with access to basic services: broadband, healthcare, childcare, and housing. In 2020, West Center spearheaded MOVE2030: Mendocino Opportunities to build a Vibrant Economy. The goal of MOVE2030 was to advance an economic resiliency strategy for the next ten years. Among the findings in the County of Mendocino Economic Development Analysis report was the need for a lead economic development agency. In May 2022, the County appointed West Center to fill that role to provide services in three strategic areas: economic development capacity; business recruitment and retention; and workforce development.

We are proud to share this impact report, which describes our services and highlights a few of the intrepid entrepreneurs we served these past two years. It provides highlights of our signature programs: Centro Latino West, StartUp Mendocino, and Emergency Preparation, and an update on the ongoing economic development initiative. MOVE2030 was just the beginning of public-private partnerships that will become the catalyst for change in our rural region.

We all continue to recover from the shock of COVID but innovations often rise out of disasters, so now is the time for us to rely on each other and work together to build a stronger local economy that works for our communities.

On behalf of the West Center team, we look forward to continuing to provide vital services, guidance, and advice to serve our community and help our region rise.



\$37.7  
MILLION  
CAPITAL INFUSION  
SINCE 2008

# THE WEST CENTER STORY

For more than 30 years, West Center has been creating self-sufficiency and prosperity for individuals through business ownership in Mendocino County. We are recognized within our rural region for developing no-cost innovative programs to educate and train individuals to launch sustainable businesses, raise family incomes, and provide economic stability and mobility in their communities. We have grown from exclusively providing small business technical assistance to becoming an economic development hub helping to grow a sustainable rural economy, and have expanded our services into Lake County.

West Center is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization initially launched in 1988 by the James Irvine Foundation's Women's Economic Development Initiative to address the needs of impoverished women. We are one of only two Women's Business Centers (WBC) in Northern California, and we are also the Mendocino-Lake Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

We are very proud of the community trust we have built over the decades, solidified by our impact in the region. Our unique approach of developing the whole entrepreneur – through culturally effective and compassionate counseling, leadership training, mentorship, and innovative programming – has made West Center the 'go to' agency for rural business development. As evidenced by hundreds of client support letters, West Center has helped many business owners achieve their goals.

Across the country, but particularly in rural communities, economic security is out of reach for many. We recognize that every business start has the potential to transform a community, and that entrepreneurship is a central pillar of economic recovery. Support of rural business owners fosters a more diverse and vibrant economic ecosystem, ensuring prosperity for individuals, their families, and entire communities.

**We welcome you to join us.**



## ECONOMIC IMPACT NUMBERS

# 2020-2021

317  
BUSINESS  
STARTS  
SINCE 2008

7,133  
COUNSELING  
HOURS



1,198 CLIENTS  
SERVED



50 BUSINESS STARTS



\$18 MILLION CAPITAL  
INFUSION



225 TRAINING EVENTS



2,575 JOBS CREATED/  
RETAINED



5,388 TRAINING  
ATTENDEES



1,026 CLIENTS  
COUNSELED



\$8.3 MILLION SALES  
INCREASE

*"The journey I have been on with my business would not be successful without West's support. Each connection with a content-area expert has helped me develop my knowledge, skills, and abilities. I am a more confident and knowledgeable business owner because of these experiences."*

AMY COLLINS, VILLAGE SOCK SHOP



547  
BUSINESSES  
LAUNCHED  
SINCE 2008

# OUR SERVICES

NO BUSINESS WILL BE  
LIKE YOUR BUSINESS

## TRAINING

West Center creates training programs and workshops that are relevant and help small business owners to succeed. In 2021, West Center delivered 106 training events attended by more than 2,700 participants. Our training topics range from the fundamentals of financial literacy and the ABCs of Digital Technology series to specialized offerings such as our Artists in Action series that gives creative entrepreneurs a grounding in how to make art a full-time business proposition.

2,465  
AVERAGE  
TRAINING ATTENDEES



## ADVISING

Taking the entrepreneurial path is an exciting and challenging adventure. Our clients have an idea for a business but often don't know how to begin their business journey. For them, the first step is to contact West Business Development Center where they will obtain no-cost guidance, advice, and training that will put them on the road to success. The West Center team of advisors, who are experts in a wide range of business practices with experience in many different industries, are primed to guide clients as they begin their journey.



3,417  
AVERAGE  
COUNSELING HOURS



## GREAT BUSINESSES START WITH GREAT IDEAS



*"StartUp [Mendocino] is an extremely valuable asset for me, being able to double check myself, my business and learn things I had not realized before. I feel so honored and inspired toward a greater purpose for Happy Rides, than I had when we first began."*

LORI ENRIQUEZ, HAPPY RIDES INC.

## IT STARTS WITH AN IDEA

### HAPPY RIDES STARTS A JOURNEY

In 2020, Lori Enriquez came to West Center for guidance on how to turn her idea into a business. From personal experience she knew how challenging it was to secure non-emergency medical transportation for those we know and love. With the assistance of West Center's advising staff and programs like StartUp Mendocino, Lori launched Happy Rides Inc., a non-emergency medical transportation company, in Fort Bragg, California. In early 2022, Lori became a participant in the StartUp Mendocino business accelerator program and also expanded her business footprint to Ukiah, California.

## IT'S FUELED BY PASSION

### AN ADVENTURE BEGINS

Leonardo Gaona loves to build houses. He loves the process of starting with an idea, creating a plan, and completing a house for someone to call home. Leonardo came to West Center for help when he wanted to take his entrepreneurial idea and create a plan for his own business. He realized that in addition to being able to build a house, he also had to know the rules. Working with West Center's advisors, Leonardo is building his construction company into an entity that's starting to hire employees and grow.



*"When you join with someone that has your back, you can do anything. It doesn't matter the size of your project, put your heart in what you do and you can achieve anything."*

LEONARDO GAONA, GAONA CONSTRUCTION INC.

3,641  
JOBS CREATED/  
RETAINED  
SINCE 2008



# GROWING IS THE ADVENTURE

## CHART YOUR OWN COURSE

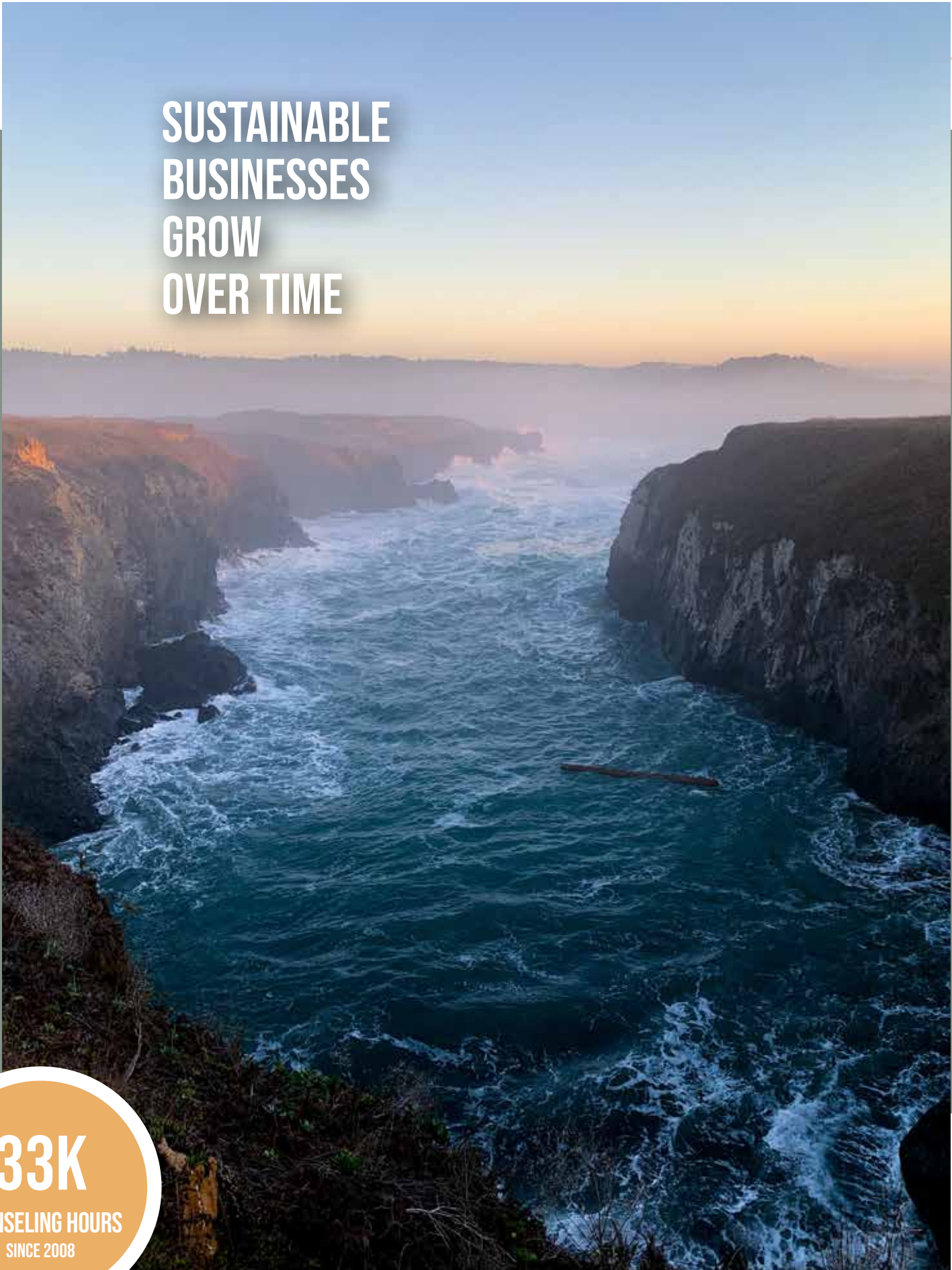
### LAMA AND THE FOREST PEOPLE

Lama Nasser-Gammett was ready to take her mushroom company to the next level. The grand prize winner of the 2019 StartUp Mendocino pitch competition, Lama of Anderson Valley's The Forest People is grateful to the advisors at West Center for helping her business get off the ground and grow. Her successful pitch gave Lama and her husband, Matthew, the confidence and funds to invest in their business and make "Radically Sustainable Mushroom Cultivation" a full-time proposition. Lama and her mushrooms and other produce are regulars at farmers' markets around Mendocino County.



*"We've made the evolution from working all hours of the day (and night!) to being able to organize our time and create structure in our day. We learned that the most effective way to be successful is to have structure. Now our current business is successful and thriving."*

**LAMA NASSER-GAMMETT, THE FOREST PEOPLE**



## SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES GROW OVER TIME

**33K**  
COUNSELING HOURS  
SINCE 2008

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
\$4.8 MILLION IN EIDL AND PPP LOANS IN 2020



*"Mendocino County has been very supportive of us. They've helped us get through the pandemic. And they are also supportive of other local vendors. I think that Mendocino County is an amazing place to start a new small business or to grow your small business."*

**JOHN STRANGIO, UKIAH VALLEY ATHLETIC CLUB**

## LET INTUITION BE YOUR GUIDE

### UKIAH VALLEY ATHLETIC CLUB TAKES THE PLUNGE

When John Strangio heard that the Ukiah Valley Athletic Club was for sale, he wasted no time in getting his wife, Lauren, and mother-in-law, Deni, to sign on as partners. They all saw the potential of this "diamond in the rough" club and worked hard to turn it into a successful business, eventually adding two new locations in Ukiah under the same brand. John recognized that there was a lack of sports accessibility for kids (and adults) and turned to West Center for help with his idea to create a sports complex that will benefit the entire community.



# WHO SAYS DREAMS DON'T COME TRUE?



*"If you've got an idea for a really great company or product but you don't have a clue about business, West Center is the ideal place to go because they will give you free information and guide you to people who will make your dream or product a reality. It's an incredible service."*

**STEVE HECKEROTH, SOLECTRAC/IDEANOMICS**

## DARE TO DREAM BIG

### SOLECTRAC: FROM NAVARRO RIDGE TO NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

It pays to dream big. Stever HeckerOTH saw a tractor demonstration at a county fair and the light bulb went off. He realized that the weight of a battery could be an integral part of an electric tractor that can do everything a diesel tractor does except without pollution or noise. More than 30 years after his revelation, West Center helped Steve launch a highly successful crowdfunding campaign that raised more than a million dollars and enabled Steve to ink a deal with Ideanomics, a global giant in sustainable transportation. In 2022, Solectrac/Ideanomics signed a nationwide distribution deal with Brim Tractor.

SUCCESS IS  
PASSION  
PLUS  
PLANNING

3,469  
CLIENTS SERVED  
SINCE 2008

## SPICING UP THE MIX

### PEACE AND PLENTY FARM

Melinda and Simon Price knew they wanted to farm when they bought property in Kelseyville in Lake County but what their crop would be was another matter. Rather than rely on the usual farm staples, they took a leap of faith by planting 50,000 crocus corms that would yield the world's most precious spice: saffron! Saffron sales alone made it hard to sustain the farm, so they reached out to West Center's specialty foods advisor for help in creating multiple value-added products to add to their highly successful farmstand that carries fresh vegetables, fruits, eggs, flowers, and more. Melinda and Simon have been featured in regional and national media.



*"We were so focused on getting the saffron in and growing it that we didn't have time, energy, or experience on the next step, which was marketing. Our advisor suggested we reach out to a specific food writer... and we got an amazing two-page spread story...."*

**MELINDA PRICE, PEACE AND PLENTY FARM**

GRANTS DISTRIBUTED  
\$750,000 BUSINESS RESILIENCY GRANTS IN 2020



# SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

## CENTRO LATINO WEST MI LUGAR PARA SER “THE BEST”

West Center created Centro Latino West to be the go-to business hub for the Latino community in Mendocino and Lake Counties. This specialized program offers outreach, one-on-one confidential business advising services, workshops, counseling, access to financial resources, and support—all in Spanish. The West Center team has three fluent Spanish-language advisors who engage with our Latino clients. And we have designed a social media outreach program that is specifically tailored for the Latino audience. In 2022, West Center will launch an intensive business training program, similar to StartUp Mendocino, for Latino business owners.



SU NEGOCIO ES TAN IMPORTANTE COMO SU FAMILIA Y SU COMUNIDAD

### ELEGANCIA RODRIGUEZ COSIENDO UNA NUEVA CARRERA

Maria Rodriguez, owner of Elegancia Rodriguez, is a talented dressmaker who had ambitions of starting her own business but didn't know where to turn. On the advice of a friend, she called West Center and received the services of Centro Latino West that helped her to start and grow her dressmaking shop. She now has a thriving business in Ukiah where she creates dresses for weddings, quinceañeras, and other special occasions.

IN 2021, WEST CENTER SERVED  
127 LATINO CLIENTS



*"A friend told me I should open my own business but I didn't know how to do it. I didn't even know English! She said, 'I know about this organization called West Center.' I opened my business practically without speaking a word of English. But thanks to West Center, they taught me everything I needed to know."*

*"Una amiga me dijo que debería abrir mi propio negocio pero no sabía cómo hacerlo. ¡Ni siquiera sabía inglés! Ella dijo: 'Sé de esta organización llamada West Center'. Abrí mi negocio prácticamente sin hablar una palabra de inglés. Pero gracias a West Center, me enseñaron todo lo que necesitaba saber."*

MARIA RODRIGUEZ,  
ELEGANCIA RODRIGUEZ



**StartUp**  
Mendocino  
BUSINESS ACCELERATOR



## STARTUP MENDOCINO ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES IN RURAL REGIONS

StartUp Mendocino is Mendocino County's only business accelerator program. StartUp Mendocino began in 2019 with a pitch competition that attracted more than 80 applications and concluded with a well attended competitive event, awarding cash prizes to the top five competitors. The pandemic created a pause in the program but in 2022 West Center launched a re-envisioned business accelerator program. This 23-week program is now focused on giving local entrepreneurs with great ideas the opportunity to participate in a course of intensive training designed to give them a solid foundation for building a successful and sustainable business.

13 STARTUP MENDOCINO PARTICIPANTS  
GRADUATED ON JUNE 9, 2022



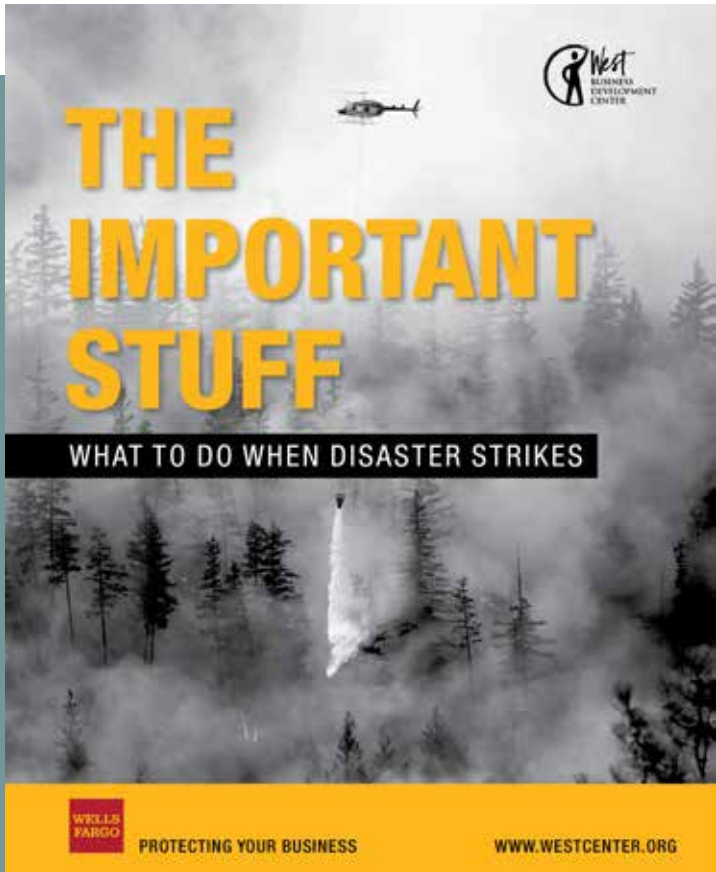
*"I am so grateful for this opportunity because it led me to StartUp Mendocino — this accelerated business growth program has created a space for me to drill down and connect with other business owners in many different fields from all walks of life."*

JASMINE EPPERSON,  
EPPERSON CONSULTING



# SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE UP  
89% OF THE MENDOCINO COUNTY ECONOMY



## EMERGENCY PREPARATION PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS

It's a reality in today's world that disasters of all types have become far too frequent. Climate change and a global pandemic threaten our stability, and floods, hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes are a persistent threat. West Center has experienced first-hand how rural businesses struggle to re-open and stay in business following a natural disaster and how lack of planning for an emergency hinders operations. To help businesses prepare, West Center has developed a program designed to deliver the steps necessary to create an emergency preparedness plan particular to a business's situation and location. West Center is translating this program to be available to Spanish speakers.

## MOVE 2030 SMALL BUSINESS IS THE ECONOMY

Mendocino Opportunities for building a Vibrant Economy—or MOVE 2030—was created to establish a vision that lays the groundwork for a more resilient economy created through public and private partnerships to provide a healthy economy that benefits all. The plan has three main areas of focus: business expansion and development; technology expansion; and green infrastructure. Since its inception in 2020, the initiative has completed phase one of the plan encompassing governance,

## MOVE 2030

Mendocino Opportunities for Building a Vibrant Economy

data research, community engagement, and foundational and transformational recommendations. The recommendations are contained in the County of Mendocino Economic Development Analysis report. In May 2022, West Center was named the Economic Development liaison organization for Mendocino County.



*"As Mendocino County faces falling revenue and rising needs, MOVE 2030 is helping county residents with boundless energy, intense focus, and practical approaches ... to help pull themselves out of the current economic muck through hard work, entrepreneurial zeal, and the satisfaction that comes from seeing their dreams become realities."*

TOM MURPHY, GUALALA  
MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL



## WWW.MOVE2030.ORG

### THREE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF FOSTERING INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH



#### EXPLORE

- what is currently shaping the economy of the region
- what skills are needed to drive a new economy
- what assets can expand to make Mendocino County more resilient



#### INVEST

- a roadmap for the next decade to ensure Mendocino County's economic resiliency
- a strategic economic framework of activities and effort
- stories of resiliency in the face of a changing world



#### CREATE

- community-wide existing initiatives with potential to advance economic outcomes
- economic growth to become a more resilient community
- revitalization of communities of color



This work was prepared using Federal funds from the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Economic Development Administration or the U.S. Department of Commerce.



ABOUT **40** PERCENT OF BUSINESSES DO NOT REOPEN AFTER DISASTERS.  
HAVING AN EMERGENCY DISASTER PLAN AND A CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN IN PLACE  
CAN REDUCE THAT RISK AND HELP THE BUSINESS RECOVER FASTER. [ FEMA ]



# MEET OUR TEAM



(LEFT TO RIGHT) Alison de Grassi, Mary Anne Petrillo, Steve Lamb, Paloma Patterson, Laura Brooks, Lillian Rubie, Kelly Gieser

## STAFF

Mary Anne Petrillo, CEO  
Jo Williams, Director of Operations  
Laura Brooks, WBC Director  
Alison de Grassi, Director of Marketing  
Kevin Williams, SBDC Director  
Steve Lamb, Client Services Mgr  
Paloma Patterson, Business Development Mgr  
Lillian Rubie, Customer Care Specialist  
Kelly Gieser, Event Coordinator

## ADVISORS

Paula McDonell, Marketing & Market Research  
Baqi Kopelman, Marketing & Advertising  
Lisa McCormack, Human Resources  
Anni Minuzzo, Specialty Foods  
Joe Rodola, Finance & Loans  
Kira Wojack, Marketing & Social Media  
George Verástegui, Generalist  
Julia Siderakis, Restaurants & Entrepreneurs  
Marinela Miclea, Marketing & Social Media



Jo Williams



Kevin Williams

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Board serves to guide the organization as it moves through growth and change. Each Board member brings their perspective and life experiences to their role.



Paul Garza, Jr., Board Chair  
Retired



Michelle Hutchins, Chair-Elect  
Superintendent of Schools for the  
Mendocino County Office of Education



Dr. Timothy Karas, Treasurer  
Superintendent/President for the  
Mendocino-Lake Community College District



Karen Arnold  
Mendocino Coast Clinics,  
Human Resources Manager



Gerardo "Gerry" Gonzalez  
Secretary  
Council Member, City of Willits



Dr. David Pai  
Mendocino College, Associate  
Professor of Computer Science



Jim Roberts  
Owner,  
The Madrones & The Brambles



Honorable John Haschak  
Mendocino County  
3rd District Supervisor



Honorable Glenn McGourty  
Mendocino County  
1st District Supervisor



David B. Thurber,  
Vice President, Branch Manager,  
Tri Counties Bank



Todd Andrus,  
Branch Experience Manager,  
Redwood Credit Union

*"My direct experience with the West Business Center during the pandemic this past year was a game changer. West is truly a valuable resource for small businesses throughout the county and a pivotal player in the economic development of our communities."*

**JIM ROBERTS, BOARD MEMBER**



# GRATITUDE TO THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT US

West Center is host to the Mendocino Women’s Business Center (WBC). The Office of Women’s Business Ownership helps women entrepreneurs through programs coordinated by the Small Business Administration program. Nationally, in 2021, the WBCs assisted in 3,289 new business starts, supported 89,697 jobs, and facilitated 1.4 million capital transactions for WBC clientele.



As part of the Northern California SBDC network, the Mendo-Lake SBDC serves all of Mendocino and Lake Counties. The Mendo-Lake SBDC is hosted by West Business Development Center, a nonprofit business development organization that helps entrepreneurs start up, get financing, grow sales, create jobs, expand, sell/buy a business, and more.

## MANY THANKS TO OUR FISCAL SPONSORS



2,525  
TRAINING SESSIONS  
SINCE 2008

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF MARCH 31, 2022 / ACCRUAL BASIS

	MAR 31, 22	MAR 31, 21	\$ CHANGE
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings	417,642	437,633	(19,991)
Accounts Receivable	180,130	144,744	35,386
Other Current Assets	54,843	21,744	33,099
Total Current Assets	652,615	604,121	48,494
TOTAL ASSETS	652,615	604,121	48,494
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	29,205	34,713	(5,508)
Credit Cards	4,585	3,197	1,388
Other Current Liabilities	152,331	56,692	95,639
Total Current Liabilities	186,121	94,602	91,519
Total Liabilities	186,121	94,602	91,519
Equity	466,494	509,520	(43,025)
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	652,615	604,121	48,494

## MANY THANKS TO OUR LOCAL SPONSORS

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County  
John and Sandra Mayfield Family Economic Development Fund  
Adventist Health  
Café Beaujolais  
The Madrones & The Brambles  
Charlie Kelly, LPL Financial  
Veikko Properties  
North Coast Brewing Company  
Lia Patterson, Realtor, Luxe Places International Realty  
Economic Development & Financing Corporation

Paul Garza, Jr.  
Carrie Marcovich  
Dr. David Pai  
Grace Rahusen  
Rotary Club of Ukiah  
Jeffrey Tavelli  
Lisa McCormack  
My Chic Farmhouse  
Gerry Gonzalez  
Dr. Timothy Karas