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ALAMEDA COUNTY CITED AS NATIONAL MODEL FOR BOOSTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EXPANDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Alameda County's unique efforts to stimulate growth in the local economy – including a collaboration with the private sector to boost East Bay business and help job-seekers – are drawing the attention of government leaders from around the country as they explore the roles counties play in regional economic development.

A new study issued by the National Association of Counties (NACO) highlights Alameda County programs as prime examples of the innovative new ways local governments are spurring regional economic growth both to create jobs and to maintain a healthy revenue base that supports core government programs.

Alameda County efforts cited in the NACO study – “Strong Economies, Resilient Counties” – include programs that work to attract and retain local business, boost the job skills of at-risk youth and job-seeking parents, and offer economic incentives to companies to provide jobs to help local residents transition off public assistance.

These efforts were also highlighted in discussions earlier this month at NACO's Annual Meeting in New Orleans, a gathering that involved officials from most of the more than 3,000 counties in the United States.

Front and center in the NACO study are the activities of the East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA), an innovative partnership involving government, business, the nonprofit sector and higher education that works to strengthen the regional economy and boost employment opportunities for people transitioning from government support.

“It's a story we are happy to share with colleagues from around the country,” said Susan S. Muranishi, Alameda County Administrator. “The story involves strong alliances we've built with the private sector that help businesses in our region to thrive and allow for a greater number of our residents to transition from government assistance to employment and economic advancement.”

The study details the success Alameda County and East Bay EDA have seen in working to improve the outcomes for people enrolled in the State's CalWORKs public assistance program. One crucial pathway to success has been East Bay EDA's promotion of County hiring incentives with the business community to encourage the hiring of CalWORKs clients. Local businesses have taken advantage of wage subsidies, on-the-job training reimbursements and funds for training through Alameda County's Social Services Agency and its Workforce Investment Board.

The study also cites Alameda County's ongoing efforts through East Bay EDA to connect underserved populations to emerging technologies. It specifically cites the East Bay Broadband program, a unique initiative launched in 2012 to bridge gaps in broadband access in low-income communities in

Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties. The program provides computers, training, virus protection software and low-cost internet subscriptions to low-income households. Last year, Alameda County donated 500 recycled computers to help participants access technology for education, job and health care services.

Also cited in the NACO study are programs Alameda County launched to help disadvantaged youth and local small and minority-owned businesses become more self-sufficient. These programs include:

- The New Beginnings initiative, which partners with private industry to create vocational training and job opportunities for at-risk youth, including young people transitioning from the juvenile justice and foster care systems.
- Dig Deep Farms and Produce, venture launched by the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League (DSAL) that provides fresh produce and sustainable employment to local residents – including adults and youth transitioning from the criminal justice system - by growing fruit and vegetables, and purchasing organic produce from other local farms to be sold and distributed in the community.
- The Small, Local and Emerging Businesses (SLEB) Program, which expands opportunities for local and minority-owned businesses to compete for County vendor and service contracts. Between July 2009 and January 2014, SLEB clients received nearly \$250 million in County contracts.

“We are proud to be getting some national attention for the innovative programs and productive alliances we have formed that are stimulating economic growth in the region and creating opportunities for all segments of our community to benefit from this strengthening economy,” said Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Chair of East Bay EDA.

NACO looked at a select few communities nationwide in its study, which concluded that government collaborations with the private and nonprofit sectors are a common theme in successful economic development efforts led by counties.

To learn more about Alameda County and the East Bay Economic Development Alliance go to www.eastbayeda.org.

To see the NACO report on the roles of counties in economic development, go to www.naco.org/research