



## Project Profile: Solano County, California

### Impact Statement

Utilizing the OEA Industry Resilience grants, Solano County transformed its approach to countywide economic development, improving cooperation between localities across the county and developing a new strategy to support local defense suppliers. The IDEA project produced a new website [Solanomeansbusiness.com](http://Solanomeansbusiness.com), housing land-use, business assistance, quality of life, and real estate information in one location, completed a series of working papers describing scope, work, and achievements of the plan, and developed plans for improved funding of local infrastructure and transportation corridors.

### Key Project Takeaways

Thanks to OEA Industry Resilience grants, Solano County was able to reorient its economic development strategies to improve regional collaboration and provide enhanced technical support to local manufacturers.

### Project Description

#### Rationale

The Department of Defense (DoD) has long been a major contributor to the economy of Solano County, California. For decades, the county was the site of Mare Island Naval Shipyard (closed in 1996) and Travis Air Force Base (AFB), making it one of California's largest centers of defense activity. Recognizing the outsized role of Travis AFB on the local economy, in 2013 the county and community leadership proposed to OEA a plan to further diversify Solano County's economy in order to lessen its dependency on defense expenditures and to improve the resilience of the area's defense suppliers.

Solano County's leaders had closely collaborated in response to the closure of Mare Island, and they created similar partnerships for this more recent work. To this end, using IR funding, Solano County conducted an Economic Diversification Study project (EDSP) which concluded in 2014. The study provided a benchmark assessment of economic activity, identified 13 strategies for diversification, and 39 immediate actions for local jurisdictions to pursue.

#### Program Activities

In the following year, Solano County, in partnership with the Solano County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC), consolidated the strategies and immediate actions into an implementation plan entitled Moving Solano Forward (MSF) Implementation of Diversifying Actions (IDEA) plan. Solano County accessed IR funding to help implement the IDEA project, which was designed to support linked goals of strengthening local economic development capacity and programs and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. The IDEA project kicked off in late 2015 and ran through 2017.

These two project phases produced a number of important outcomes for Solano County, including improved cooperation between localities across the county and a new strategy to support local defense



suppliers. Thanks to OEA Industry Resilience funding, Solano County has transformed its approach to countywide economic development.

Solano County concluded implementation of the IDEA project in June 2017. Among other things, the IDEA project produced a new website “SolanoMeansBusiness.com,” which houses land-use, business assistance, quality of life, and real estate information in one location. In addition to the website, a series of working papers have been completed describing in detail the scope, work, and achievements of the plan. The project also developed plans for improved funding of local infrastructure and transportation corridors, and also introduced new tools to help support the retention and expansion of local employers.

Solano County has strong planning policies that direct urban development into incorporated cities. The City of Fairfield has a Travis Air Force Base Protection Plan built into its General Plan. These studies focused on opportunities for economic development within existing or planned industrial areas, which supports County and city economic development and also limits encroachment dangers at the base.

## Resiliency Impacts

### Increasing Awareness of the Defense Industrial Base

Project research has focused on how best to support local manufacturers, especially those operating in aerospace and defense-related industries. These firms are also a key target of newly created business retention and expansion programs led by SCEDC.

## Other Community Benefits

### Industries Impacted and Communities Served

Prior to OEA funding, local municipalities were uncertain of the goal and role of the county economic development organization played in contributing to the economic improvement of the county. After two rounds of funding, the Solano County Economic Development Corporation has begun earning the trust and support of local leadership. To this end, the MSF project team conducted research into various funding models and budgets of similar county economic development entities and has recommended a public-private partnership funding model that seeks charitable donations, private funding from nearby mid-size companies, and asks local jurisdictions to contribute \$0.40 per-capita investment to support the SCEDC. A new more robust capability to support local defense suppliers is now in place.