



**SAN BENITO COUNTY
AGENDA ITEM
TRANSMITTAL FORM**

Mindy Sotelo
Board of Supervisors
Chair

Angela Curro
Board of Supervisors
Vice-Chair

Item Number: 6.c

MEETING DATE: 10/16/2024

DEPARTMENT: COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

AGENDA ITEM PREPARER: Gracie Rodriguez

SUBJECT:

Receive an informational presentation from S.B.C Community Consulting Services representative Richard Perez Sr regarding the Empower San Benito Agrivoltaic Development Project initiative. Discuss and, if desired, provide staff direction and consider making a recommendation to the County Board of Supervisors.

AGENDA SECTION:

REGULAR AGENDA

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:

Agrivoltaics Renewable Energy Project Summary

The proposed scope of work for the Empower San Benito Agrivoltaic Development Project is specifically designed to enhance San Benito County's economic development. This unique initiative will leverage a multifaceted strategy to foster collaboration, build capacity, and drive regional economic revitalization, substantially benefiting the county.

Enhancing Economic Development Planning Capacity

The project will create high-quality jobs in the renewable energy sector and implement comprehensive training programs in collaboration with local educational institutions. These programs will equip residents with the skills necessary to thrive in the green energy economy, reducing unemployment and significantly increasing household incomes, particularly in economically challenged areas.

The project's success is not solely dependent on the efforts of individual stakeholders but on the alignment and synergy among all. This is made possible by a strong foundation of collaboration with a diverse coalition of key partners, including the Costanoan Indian Research, Latino Coalition of San Benito, County Office of Education, and Hollister High School. SBC Community Consulting, as the lead grant writer, technical advisor, and project manager, will ensure this alignment and synergy, instilling confidence in the project's execution.

Building Capacity of Public Officials and Economic Development Organizations

The project will expand the capacity of public officials and economic development organizations to work effectively with employers through targeted training programs focusing on best practices in renewable energy deployment, sustainable agriculture, and workforce development. By enhancing their knowledge and skills, public officials will be better equipped to support and facilitate economic growth in the region. The project will also implement a strategic planning process to coordinate using available resources, creating a comprehensive economic development strategy by identifying and aligning local, state, and federal resources.

Expanding Regional Economic Capacity

The project aims to support and transform economic recovery by creating a sustainable and diversified economic base. Developing renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar-plus-storage microgrids, will reduce energy costs for households and businesses and make the region more attractive to new and existing enterprises. This will spur economic activity and create a more dynamic and resilient regional economy, giving hope for a brighter future. Integrating renewable energy and sustainable agricultural practices will position San Benito County as a leader in the green economy, attracting investment, stimulating entrepreneurship, and creating new economic opportunities for residents.

Job Creation and Workforce Development

The project will deliver comprehensive training and certification programs in renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. These programs will create a skilled workforce ready to meet the demands of the green energy sector, reduce local unemployment rates, and increase household incomes, particularly in economically challenged areas. The primary beneficiaries will be residents of San Benito County, especially those in disadvantaged communities and local employers in the renewable energy and agriculture sectors. Additionally, the existing building at **255 Apollo Way** will be transformed into an innovation and training facility dedicated to creating certified energy practitioners, providing hands-on learning opportunities and state-of-the-art training resources.

Renewable Energy Infrastructure

Implementing solar-plus-storage microgrids and other advanced renewable energy systems will lower energy costs for households and businesses, improve energy security and reliability, and significantly reduce CO2 emissions and other pollutants, improving air quality. The primary beneficiaries of this infrastructure will be residents and businesses in San Benito County, as well as the environment and public health sectors.

Educational and Research Facility

The project will establish a working lab and research facility at **0 Wright Rd.** for hands-on renewable and agricultural technology learning. This facility will enhance educational opportunities for students, increase practical skills and knowledge in renewable energy and sustainable agriculture, and create a pipeline of qualified individuals ready for future deployment in the green energy sector. The primary beneficiaries will be students and educators in San Benito County and the future workforce in the renewable energy

and agriculture sectors.

Community Engagement and Strategic Planning

Inclusive participation in workshops, educational programs, and sustainability initiatives will develop a coordinated economic development strategy that aligns local, state, and federal resources. This will increase community understanding of renewable energy and sustainability, foster community-driven initiatives and a sense of ownership and pride, and strengthen community resilience, especially in remote and rural areas. The primary beneficiaries will be residents of San Benito County, with a focus on disadvantaged and rural communities, local community organizations and leaders, public officials and economic development organizations, local employers and businesses, and the broader regional economy.

Time Frame and Project Schedule

The project will follow a detailed timeline over three years, starting with planning and initial implementation in the first year, expansion and scaling in the second year, and operation and optimization in the third year. This structured approach ensures the project's components are systematically developed and evaluated, leading to sustainable and impactful outcomes.

Alignment with EDA Investment Priorities

The Empower San Benito Agrivoltaic Development Project aligns with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) investment priorities, including equity, recovery, resilience, workforce development, manufacturing, technology-based economic development, and environmentally sustainable development. The project ensures that economic growth is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable by focusing on disadvantaged communities, implementing renewable energy systems, and providing comprehensive training programs. Furthermore, several federal and state agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Labor (DOL), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), California Clean Energy Commission, California Air Resources Board, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, REACH, and Uplift Central Coast will also participate, bringing additional resources and expertise.

In summary, the Empower San Benito Agrivoltaic Development Project is a comprehensive initiative designed to enhance San Benito County's economic development planning capacity through strategic collaboration, targeted training programs, and innovative approaches to economic revitalization. The project will build the capacity of public officials and economic development organizations, support economic recovery, and drive sustainable economic growth, creating a vibrant, resilient, and equitable economy for all residents of San Benito County.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive an informational presentation from S.B.C Community Consulting Services regarding the Empower San Benito Agrivoltaic Development Project initiative.
2. Discuss and, if desired, provide staff direction.
3. Consider making a recommendation to the County Board of Supervisors

ATTACHMENTS:

[2024 LCSBC - SBC Green Energy Initiative 10-16-2024](#)