



Board of Supervisors  
County of Solano

October 5, 2021

Dear Supervisors,

On behalf of the Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County, the America's Job Centers of California (AJCC), and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Solano County, I urge you to consider investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in workforce development (reemployment and job training) and small business supports. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, Solano County's *Community Health Assessment Report* identified economic security as the most prioritized health need. COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts have only exacerbated this need; strategic local investment is, therefore, needed to ensure that our vulnerable populations, businesses, and neighborhoods do not fall further behind.

The WDB believes that without family-sustaining employment and a well-aligned labor market, our families and economy as a whole will not recover effectively from the COVID-19 pandemic, which will have lasting effects on our social services systems and our economy. The current labor market is unlike any labor market in our history – our workforce is hesitant to return to work and wanting to enter more fulfilling and family-sustaining employment opportunities, which will require job training and career coaching. In addition, our businesses are struggling to recruit and retain workers in an environment where company culture and job quality is a stronger consideration for our residents, in addition to trying to evolve to meet new economic and consumer demands. Businesses will need technical assistance and support to adjust to a post-COVID economy and labor market. To assist our vulnerable families and businesses in returning to pre-pandemic financial stability or better, local strategic investment will be necessary.

Workforce development and small business assistance fits into the following ARPA categories as defined by the IRS:

1. **Addressing the Negative Economic Impacts Caused by the Public Health Emergency**
  - a. Assist unemployed workers impacted by the pandemic – returning to employment, finding new employment, or job training for better employment
  - b. Rebuild public sector capacity and workforce
  - c. Support small businesses – COVID prevention and mitigation tactics, technical assistance and counseling, loans and grants
  - d. Improve efficacy of economic and workforce relief programs through data analysis and impact reports
  - e. Accelerate recovery of COVID-impacted industries, such as hospitality
  - f. Improve digital access and literacy

2. **Serving the Hardest-Hit Communities and Families** – the communities and demographic populations hardest hit due to COVID-19 are identified by IRS guidelines. The identified disadvantaged communities in Vallejo and Fairfield are also the areas of highest unemployment and highest poverty in the county. They have historically been disproportionately impacted with limited economy opportunity and will likely experience delayed and long-term economic impacts without investment in economic mobility opportunities.

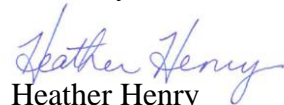
The IRS ARPA categories align with Solano's *Local Workforce Development Plan* as identified in the County's ARPA reference document. The plan identifies five key COVID recovery strategies:

1. Target services and investments in geographic areas and populations most affected by COVID;
2. Prepare businesses and residents for increased workplace digitization;
3. Purposefully utilize supportive service strategies to help stabilize Solano's talent base;
4. Enhance career pathways and talent pipeline solutions in key industries; and
5. Build awareness and partnerships around workforce equity and job quality to encourage an inclusive economic recovery.

For further information on recommended COVID-recovery workforce strategies, the Local Plan can be found at <http://solanoemployment.org/wioa-guidance>. The WDB additionally produced a COVID-19 data report in 2020 highlighting negative impacts of COVID-19 on the workforce and small business base, which can be viewed at <https://solanoemployment.org/covid-numbers>.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Heather Henry  
President/Executive Director