



AGENDA
Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District
Board of Directors Special Meeting - Friday, January 23, 2026, at 12 Noon PT

Remote Attendance Link:

<https://mendocino-edu.zoom.us/j/81394622847?pwd=kLPpedNtgzKIBlx0vNp87vt2jfJyRb.1>

Meeting ID: 813 9462 2847

Passcode: 479629

In Person Meeting Locations:

Mendocino Coast Health Care District
775 River Drive, **Fort Bragg**, CA 95437

and

Sacramento City College Library Room 209
3835 Freeport Boulevard
Sacramento, CA 95822

and

Sonoma County Economic Development Collaborative (707) 565-7170
141 Stony Circle, Suite 110, **Santa Rosa**, CA 95401

CALL TO ORDER by Paul Garza, Chairperson

ROLL CALL by Robin Bartholow

- Chairperson Paul Garza
- Vice Chairperson Jeff Kelly
- Treasurer Craig Schlatter
- Board Member Lisa Badenfort
- Board Member Robin Bartholow
- Board Member Tim Karas
- Board Member Nicholas Schwanz

Vacancies:

- Board Member - Mendocino County
- Board Member At-Large - Vacant Seat Board Member At-Large - Vacant Seat

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION - Action Item

Item Should the Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District request a pause in participation of the EDA Partnership Grant for the purpose of re-structuring

PUBLIC COMMENT - Open time for Public Expression

Time reserved for members of the public to speak on this matter.

There will be one opportunity for public comment on all consent items. Comments are limited to 3 minutes each, and the Chairperson may limit this time if reasonable under the circumstance

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OR COMMENTS

Time reserved for members of the Board to speak on matters not otherwise appearing on the agenda. No Actions.

ADJOURNMENT by Chairperson

For a copy of Board Packet materials, please visit smedd.specialdistrict.org



DATE: January 20,2026

TO: SMEDD Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Garza, Jr., Chair

SUBJECT: Request for Pause in Participation of Operations to Restructure

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: The purpose of this item is to provide direction to the Chair regarding a request for temporary suspension of Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District’s operations to enable a restructure of the organization.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Direct the Chair to send the attached letter to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration Region IX, requesting a pause in participation of operations to enable a restructure of SMEDD.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

None.

BACKGROUND:

Both the Sonoma Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) and the economic development staff of the County of Mendocino have expressed a preference to discontinue support for SMEDD due to the administrative, governance, and financial burdens of maintaining it. Further, the County of Mendocino’s position is now vacant with the resignation of the former incumbent. The University of California Cooperative Education, Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) has expressed very strong interest in assuming the responsibilities of the Counties. To date, however, objections have been expressed by the Sonoma EDC to UCANR’s proposal. It is unclear at this time whether that proposal can be considered.

In a discussion with the EDA’s Regional Administrator, Mr. Chris Cox, requested that rather than terminate SMEDD that a ‘pause in participation’ be requested. Such a ‘pause’ provides time to develop a new structure that would enable SMEDD to continue at some point in the near future. Mr. Cox indicated that the situation currently faced by SMEDD is not unusual and that currently there are other Districts that are paused. Mr. Cox emphatically stated the EDA does not like to terminate Economic Development Districts because of the very substantial amount of work involved in both the termination and authorization of a new organization.

DISCUSSION:

The District cannot continue to operate without staff and without the ability to provide matching funds to the federal grant. In October, 2025 the Board of Directors approved receipt of the grant funds. Those funds, however, have not been received because we have not been able to establish a working relationship with a new

organization. The District has the choice of either requesting a pause in participation or notifying the EDA that we are closing the District permanently.

OPTIONS:

1. The Board of Directors may choose to send the letter requesting a pause in participation.
2. The Board of Directors may choose to permanently close the District.

Attachments:

1. Draft of Letter to EDA requesting suspension
2. Email from Christopher Cox

January 23, 2026

Chris Cox
Administrative Director
Seattle Regional Office
Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

Dear Mr. Cox,

The Board of Directors of the Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District respectfully requests a pause in participation with the EDA Partnership Program. The reason for this request is that the County entities that comprise the District have expressed a preference to discontinue support for SMEDD due to the administrative, governance, and financial burdens of maintaining it. Therefore, the District currently is unable to perform its basic operations and has no current ability to provide required matching funds to the Partnership Grant.

In October, 2025, the Board of Directors voted to accept the new grant and as Chair I have completed the required form. However, the newly accepted grant will not be able to be implemented for the cited reasons and the board votes to close the grant out as a mutually accepted solution as no work or funding has started on it.

We are hopeful that you will approve this pause in participation and provide SMEDD the opportunity to undergo whatever restricting is necessary to enable it to resume its responsibilities required by the EDA Partnership Grant and, the designation as an authorized Economic Development District. After review and restructuring, the SMEDD Board of Directors will reach out to the EDA Seattle Regional Office when new capacity is developed.

Sincerely,

Paul Garza, Jr.
Chair
Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District

From: "Cox, Chris (Federal)" <CCox@eda.gov>
Subject: District status/ Expired grant / New grant
Date: December 15, 2025 at 2:33:42 PM PST
To: Paul Garza Jr <pgarza@garzaconsulting.com>
Cc: "Hays, Jeffrey (Federal)" <JHays@eda.gov>, "Metiva, Sharon (Federal)" <SMetiva@eda.gov>

Paul,

Thank you for meeting with Sharon and myself just now. I am summarizing our discussion for record and providing guidance for next steps below.

Synopsis: As explained by Mr. Garza, due to district current constraints, SMEDD, is no longer in a financial position or staffing capacity to accept the newly issued grant. The district board is going to convene and vote on a decision to temporarily pause participation with the EDA Partnership Planning program or close the district permanently. After review and restructuring, the board for SMEDD will reach out to the EDA Seattle Regional Office when new capacity is developed.

Actions for the expired grant: ED20SEA3070045

1. By Dec 26, 2025 – SMEDD should send a Final SF-425 emailed to Sharon Metiva, smetiva@eda.gov. This will allow our office to officially close out the expired grant.

Actions for the newly accepted grant:

1. By January 31st, 2026 – SMEDD board should send an official letter to EDA requesting to pause in participation with the EDA Partnership Program and cite reasons why. Please add in the letter that the newly accepted grant will not be able to be implemented for the cited reasons and the board votes to close the grant out as mutually accepted solution as no work or funding has started on it.

If you have any questions, please let us know and we will be glad to assist.

V/R,

Chris Cox

Administrative Director

Seattle Regional Office

Economic Development Administration U.S.

Department of Commerce

CCOX@eda.gov / 206.482.2032 / eda.gov

Jackson Federal Building, 915 2nd Ave, Seattle, WA 98174

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