



December 10, 2024

Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**Mike Pettit**  
Assistant County Executive Officer

**Scott Powers**  
County Chief Financial Officer

**Danielle Keys**  
County Human Resources Director  
Labor Relations

**Subject: Authorization for the County Executive Officer or Her Designee to Submit a Grant Application for the Uplift Central Coast Catalyst Partnership Opportunity Grant for Ventura County Aerospace Innovation Hub (Uplift Catalyst Grant) in the Amount Not to Exceed \$1,000,000.**

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended your Board authorize the County Executive Officer or her designee to submit a grant application for the Uplift Central Coast Catalyst Partnership Opportunity Grant for Ventura County Aerospace Innovation Hub (Uplift Catalyst Grant) in the amount not to exceed \$1,000,000.

**Fiscal/Mandates Impact:**

There is no current fiscal impact. If awarded the grant, we will return to this Board with a recommendation to accept, receive and execute the Uplift Catalyst Grant award, agreement and related documents.

**Strategic Plan:**

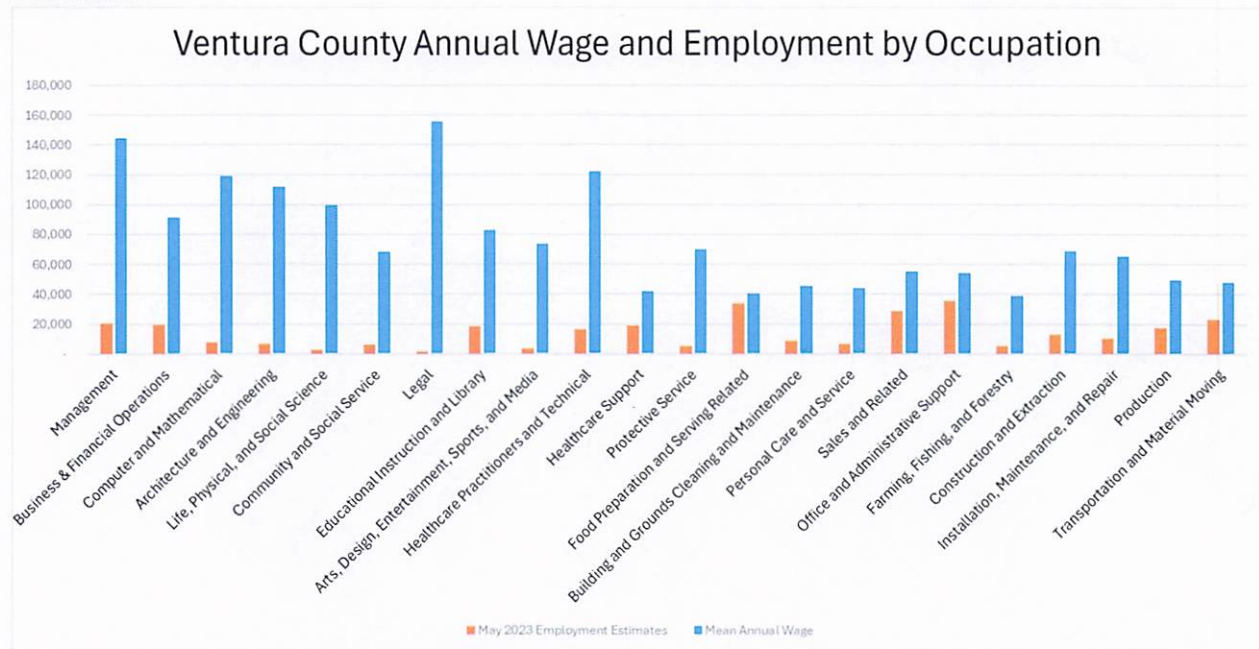
The Uplift Central Coast Catalyst Partnership Opportunity Grant for Ventura County Aerospace Innovation Hub supports the Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality Strategic Priority of your Board's Strategic Plan by making responsible and efficient use of public funds and promote economic stability and growth during a changing economy. Specifically, the Ventura County Innovation Hub will foster a thriving business ecosystem to create jobs, increase wages, and strengthen the local economy.

**Background:**

The County of Ventura gross domestic product (GDP) is \$62 billion (current dollars), which ranks 13<sup>th</sup> out of 58 counties in California. GDP has seen a modest growth of 4% since 2018, with a slight contraction (-0.04%) last year. Unemployment in Ventura

County was at 4.5% in June 2024. This compares to California at 5.3% and the United States at 4.3% during the same period. The median household income in Ventura County is approximately \$102,569. The Per Capita Income is \$45,846. The living wage for a single adult in Ventura County is estimated to be \$58,143 annually ([according to the Living Wage Institute](#)).

The following table illustrates the Mean Annual Wages (blue) and the estimated employment numbers as of May 2023 (orange). Concentrating on higher-paying occupations within rapidly expanding and productive industries (such as technology and innovation and manufacturing) is crucial for boosting GDP and enhancing overall quality of life. By targeting occupations such as computer and mathematics, architecture and engineering, as well as life, physical, and social sciences, and arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media, we can stimulate employment growth and elevate incomes.



The County of Ventura, Office of Economic Development in the County Executive Office is updating the Economic Vitality Strategic Plan. Updating the plan has included connecting deeply with the Economic Vitality community across the County to better understand where to focus. In alignment with the data, and economic vitality community input, we have defined the following priorities for economic vitality as we build the Economic Vitality Strategic Plan.

1. Foster Business Growth and Enhance Quality Job Creation
2. Cultivate Creativity, Innovation, Entrepreneurship
3. Strengthen Economic Resilience and Diversification
4. Develop Infrastructure and Support Housing



The Economic Vitality team conducted a series of comprehensive listening sessions with more than thirteen diverse stakeholders throughout the County of Ventura. During these sessions, particularly in the Innovation and Technology segment, we gained insights into significant activities at our local airports. These activities not only currently enhance our economic vitality but also present substantial opportunities for further economic development. The Department of Airports in partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks is establishing a 500-square-mile Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) aircraft testing site with a streamlined "standing Certificate of Authorization" (COA) for rapid deployment of testing activities. This streamline flight testing process reduces the time the FAA requires to approve flight testing. The typical FAA approval process typically requires 12-18 months. However, this streamlined process will require less than 30 days, which will be very effective in attracting AAM companies to Ventura County. This aircraft test range would include Camarillo Airport, Oxnard Airport and California State University Channel Islands former airport properties.

Ventura County is home to the Naval Base Ventura County Tech Bridge. The Ventura County Tech Bridge evaluates developing tech against operational needs in the port and maritime domains and suggests pathways for engagement, funding, collaboration, and implementation. Housed within the commercial Port of Hueneme, the Tech Bridge makes it easier for startups, scaleups, and small businesses who have never worked with the Department of the Navy to deliver disruptive technology — all within 2-5 years.

### **Discussion:**

The Ventura County Innovation Hub project will establish one of California's largest public (non-military) Advanced Air Mobility testing sites integrated with a comprehensive aerospace innovation facility operation at Camarillo and Oxnard Airports. This transformative initiative combines unique aerospace testing capabilities with business development and workforce training services to create a complete ecosystem supporting advanced aviation technology development in the Central Coast region.

The project leverages two County departments' complementary strengths: The Department of Airports will establish and operate a 500-square-mile Advanced Air Mobility testing site with a streamlined "standing Certificate of Authorization" (COA) for rapid deployment of testing activities. The Department of Economic Vitality will develop an Innovation Hub facility with operations at Camarillo and Oxnard Airports that connects private sector companies with military technology transfer, workforce development, and business support services.

By combining testing infrastructure, military partnerships, and workforce development, we will create a comprehensive ecosystem that attracts and retains high-tech aerospace companies while ensuring our community benefits from this growth.

The Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) is a catalytic investment for California's 13 regions, designed to spur systemic change to build a more equitable, resilient economy. The Catalyst Program reserves up to \$14 million for each CERF region to bridge the gap between planning regional economic development strategies and implementing projects designed to achieve outcomes that align with those strategies. The objective of Catalyst Predevelopment Funding is to support sector-specific predevelopment activities that align with regional strategies developed under the California Jobs First initiative. Uplift Central Coast (one of 13 regions) was awarded \$9 million for sector-specific predevelopment activities that support strategic community projects and initiatives in the Central Coast region.

Application submission deadline is Friday, December 13, 2024, with the award announcement in the middle of January 2025. Catalyst Program funds will be made available by May 1, 2024. Funds must be fully expensed by September 30, 2026.

It is recommended that your Board Authorize the County Executive Officer or her designee to submit a grant application for the Uplift Central Coast Catalyst Partnership Opportunity Grant for Ventura County Aerospace Innovation Hub (Uplift Catalyst Grant) in the amount of \$1,000,000.

This item has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, County Counsel, and Auditor-Controller's Office. Should you have any questions please contact Estelle Bussa (805) 654-2272.

Sincerely,



Estelle Bussa  
Deputy Executive Officer



Sevet Johnson, Psy.D.  
County Executive Officer

Exh. 1: Catalyst Application