

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR REPORT

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America's **Job**Center
of CaliforniaSM



DEL NORTE COUNTY

3rd Quarter Update
JAN | FEB | MAR | 2026

- Program Spotlight
- Client Services
- Employer Highlights & Partnerships
- Community Engagement
- Staff Development

Growth & Success in the New Year

In Quarter 3, SMART Workforce Center continued to strengthen workforce connections across Del Norte County through strategic partnerships, community engagement, and hands-on training opportunities.

From supporting justice-involved individuals through Second Chance efforts to connecting job seekers with local employers, our work remains focused on creating pathways to sustainable employment and a stronger local economy.



Proud Partner of:  NORTEC

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: REALM | WAF 12



Across our four-county region, staff have been working diligently on the Workforce Accelerator Fund 12.0: Rural Access for English Learners in Manufacturing (REALM). This grant ended on March 31, 2026, and had an enrollment goal of 40 participants.

Originally, REALM focused on developing work-based training opportunities with manufacturing employers. The primary objective was to connect English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrants to career pathways in manufacturing through On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities. Through these OJTs, SMART monitored participant progress and reimbursed employers 50% of trainee wages during the training period, helping offset costs and encourage employer participation.

Initial grant guidelines proved restrictive, resulting in a slower-than-anticipated start for enrollments and OJT development. However, in early fall 2025, the state broadened the guidelines to allow more education-based training opportunities and additional employment industries other than manufacturing. This shift created new momentum, and the regional programs team quickly mobilized to expand outreach, increase enrollments, and connect participants to relevant training programs.

A major catalyst for success emerged in Tulelake (Siskiyou County)—a small, rural agricultural community in far northeastern California with a strong Spanish-speaking population. A SMART staff member who grew up in the area and now works out of the SMART Job Center in Yreka leveraged deep community connections to coordinate group orientations and streamline enrollment into the REALM grant.

Many participants brought strong agricultural work experience and transferable skills. One pathway was supporting participants in obtaining their Commercial Class A driver's licenses—an in-demand credential that builds on their existing experience and opens doors to higher-wage employment opportunities.

The success of REALM is a testament to the dedication, adaptability, and community commitment of SMART staff. By pivoting strategically in the final six months of the grant, the team accelerated enrollments, expanded training access, and ensured that participant funds were effectively invested. REALM reflects the strength of SMART's regional collaboration.



“When we invest in second chances, we unlock potential, restore dignity, and build a stronger workforce for everyone.”

HIRE grant supports reentry success by funding training, employment services, and wraparound support for justice-involved individuals—creating pathways to stable careers, stronger communities, and a more inclusive workforce.

Client Services:

Kyle E. Transitional Job Success

Kyle E. was referred to SMART by Probation following a period of incarceration and faced significant barriers to employment due to his background. Despite his strong motivation to work, securing an opportunity proved challenging.

Through SMART Workforce Center services, Kyle was placed in a temporary position with the County of Del Norte Parks and Building Maintenance Department as a Facilities Maintenance Worker under the STORM grant. During this time, he demonstrated reliability, a strong work ethic, and a willingness to learn. When the grant concluded, SMART staff worked to ensure Kyle’s progress continued by connecting him with Del Norte Mission Possible.

At Del Norte Mission Possible, Kyle successfully completed a transitional job as a Prep Cook that then advanced into an on-the-job training position. He is now employed as an Assistant Cook, where he continues to thrive. Looking ahead, Kyle is preparing to step into a Cook position at Mission Possible’s new shelter, opening soon. His supervisor describes him as “an excellent assistant cook,” noting his initiative, precision in cooking and preparation, and his calm demeanor in fast-paced kitchen environments.

Kyle’s journey reflects the impact of Second Chance opportunities and strong community partnerships. With continued support from SMART Workforce Center staff, he has overcome significant barriers, gained valuable skills, and secured meaningful employment. His success stands as a testament to resilience and the power of coordinated workforce services.

Employer Highlights:

Del Norte Mission Possible

Del Norte Mission Possible continues to be an outstanding partner in supporting justice-involved participants through Second Chance grant opportunities. As shared by Director Cortese-Lambert, “these efforts have been instrumental in changing lives for the betterment of participants, the organization, and our community”.

Through this collaboration over the past 2 years, nine participants have been provided employment opportunities, participating in either a transitional job or on-the-job training assignments. Brandon R., Lindsey D., and John H. successfully completed their transitional jobs and have been retained as full-time employees. Samantha R. is performing exceptionally well and is anticipated to be retained upon completion of her transitional job assignment. Kyle E. has completed his on-the-job training and is currently working as a Cook Assistant, with plans to transition into a Cook position when the shelter opens. Cody A. has been hired into an on-the-job training position as Shelter Staff, where he is developing skills to support individuals transitioning from homelessness by connecting them with shelter services and local resources.

Serving individuals experiencing homelessness in Del Norte County, Del Norte Mission Possible has prioritized hiring from within the community it serves.

Director Cortese-Lambert stated, “participants have proven to be valuable employees. They are hard-working, dependable, and committed to giving back to the community.” This helps to inspire others by demonstrating that barriers can be overcome.

“This partnership has resulted in more than job placements; it has provided meaningful second chances, empowering participants to thrive and creating a ripple effect that strengthens the entire community.” – Daphne Cortese-Lambert

Special thanks to HIRE Grant supporters like Del Norte Mission Possible who make these second chance opportunities possible.



Kyle E. Hard at work in the kitchen, demonstrating his skills as Cook Assistant.



Employer Partnerships

Work based trainings are an important tool in strengthening our community. They help remove barriers to employment, open doors to new career pathways, and support local businesses in finding and developing talent across Del Norte County and our other SMART regions:

- Macy's Flying Service
- Emerald Ridge Construction
- Coast Cuts Barber Shop
- All Good Hardwood Floors Inc.
- Del Norte Mission Possible
- Tiny Mighty Strong
- Blink Optometry
- County of Trinity
- AGT CPA's and Advisors
- Professional Tile & Granite
- Zach Bay State Farm
- US Forest Service
- First and Last Coffee Lounge

Community Engagement: Community School Family Engagement Fair

SMART Workforce Center staff participated in the Family Engagement Resource Fair, hosted by Community School on February 19th in Crescent City. This event was created to strengthen connections between local families and the range of supportive resources available within the community.

The fair featured a welcoming, table-style setup, allowing attendees to easily move from one resource station to another. Designed to be both engaging and efficient, the event lasted just under an hour while offering meaningful opportunities for families to interact with service providers.

SMART Workforce Center staff were grateful to be part of this interactive event, sharing information about employment services and training opportunities.



SMART Staff ready to engage with our community members!

Community Engagement: Family Connections

SMART Workforce Center Del Norte Staff were invited to present to Family Connections Independent Living Program (ILP). ILP serves foster children of CWS or Probation; ages 15.5 to 21 years. ILP services provide training and programs to assist current and former foster youth achieve self-sufficiency prior to and after leaving foster care.

Some of the services provided through ILP include:

- Money management
- Daily living skills
- Decision making
- Building self-esteem
- Financial assistance with college or vocational schools
- Educational Resources Housing (Transitional Housing)
- Employment

Staff shared information on SMART services, including the Young Adult Program, resume assistance, career assessments, interview prep, job search and Work Experience (WEX) opportunities and supportive services.

As a result of this presentation we have seen young adults already show interest and pick up application for services!

Business Services: Spring Del Norte Job Fair



Spring Job Fair
Thursday, April 16, 2026
11:00AM to 2:00PM

JOB SEEKERS WANTED
Thursday, April 16, 2026
11:00AM to 2:00PM
Main Hall
Del Norte Fairgrounds

Need help with your resume?
Want to brush up on your interview skills? Have questions or need help registering for the job fair?

Make an appointment to visit our Job Center before the job fair to make sure you are interview ready!

Contact SMART Workforce Center at 707.464.8347

Register Today!
<https://www.thesmartcenter.biz/del-norte-job-fair>

Hosted by
SMART Workforce Center
and Department of Health and Human Services
Expanded Subsidized Employment Program

SMART Workforce Center is an equal opportunity employer.
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
TTY: CA Relay Number 711

Visit SMART for registration help & get 15 FREE resume copies!



SMART is gearing up to host an exciting Job Fair on April 16th at the Del Norte Fairgrounds, in partnership with Del Norte County Health and Human Services.

This event is designed to connect job seekers with a wide range of local employers, training programs, and community resources, all in one convenient location. Whether you're entering the workforce for the first time, looking to make a career change, or seeking new opportunities, the job fair offers a valuable chance to network and explore openings.

Continued:

Business Services Spring Del Norte Job Fair

Job seekers can expect to meet representatives from various industries, gain insights into current hiring needs, and potentially participate in on-the-spot interviews. In addition to employer booths, the event will highlight services available through community partners, helping individuals overcome barriers to employment and build long-term career success.

The collaboration between SMART Workforce Center and Del Norte County Health and Human Services underscores a shared commitment to strengthening the local workforce and supporting economic growth in the region.

Staff Development: Department of Rehabilitation

SMART Workforce Center and the California Department of Rehabilitation have begun working together to serve DOR clients through a special partnership grant. SMART Workforce Center staff participated in a Professional Development session to learn more about serving individuals with disabilities.

In February, SMART representatives tuned into the webinar “Neurodiversity and the Workforce”. Topics covered by Natalie Aguilar, presenter from Loyola Marymount University, included Sensory Integration and Neurodivergence. Highlighted were the importance of heightening awareness and understanding of natural variation in human neurocognitive function, and to help to shift organizational thinking towards improved belonging and inclusivity.

The very important Neurodiversity Movement was discussed, in seeking to further explore related rights and equality. The overall goal was to inform and improve organizational work climate and culture, recognizing acceptance of diversity. The sessions were interactive and well-grounded in practical suggestions for all workforce settings.

Accommodation suggestions for employers included: flexible work hours & schedules, physical accessibility and sensory equipment, assistive technology, requesting precise instructions, and Job/Executive Function job coaches or therapists.

SMART Workforce Center is looking forward to further collaboration with our local Department of Rehabilitation.

Did You Know?

A decade strong!

The Del Norte Job Fair has been co-hosted in partnership with the County of Del Norte Health & Human Services Agency’s Expanded Subsidized Employment Program—demonstrating the power of collaboration in supporting local job seekers!