



TACKLING POVERTY CONCERNS

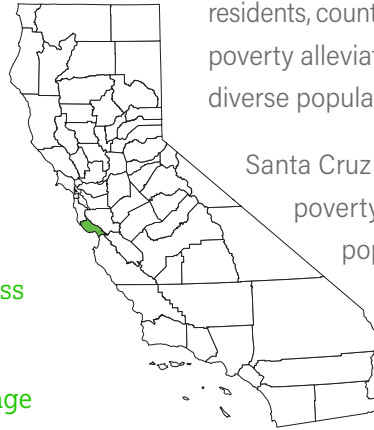
How Counties Are Listening to Residents to Address Poverty

Santa Cruz County, California

Challenge: Counties consistently name economic development as a top priority, highlighting the urgent need for more affordable housing, food security and access to healthcare.

Solution: Counties can address this challenge by engaging with representatives from their communities to promote change.

Counties consistently name economic development as a top priority, highlighting the urgent need for more affordable housing, food security and access to healthcare. **The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported a poverty rate of 11.1 percent, underscoring the widespread nature of this challenge.** While counties are actively addressing poverty within their communities, a gap remains between the assistance available to residents and the support offered by local governments. This gap often makes it difficult for counties to effectively meet the needs of their most vulnerable populations.



Counties can address this challenge by engaging with representatives from their communities to promote change. Additionally, they can implement targeted outreach programs to ensure that residents from all income levels are aware of available resources, such as housing assistance or food programs. Another effective strategy is to partner with local nonprofits and businesses to create sustainable solutions, such as job training and affordable childcare, that address the root causes of poverty. By fostering collaboration between government, community organizations and residents, counties can develop more inclusive and effective poverty alleviation programs that meet the needs of their diverse populations.

Santa Cruz County, California has one of the highest poverty rates in California with 15 percent of its population living under the federal poverty line of \$24,300 a year (for a family of four). Therefore, county leaders brought members of the community together to reach their collective goal of eliminating poverty. The Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County is a tripartite board that works closely with members of the community to create social change. One third of the Board of Directors are low-income representatives from all regions in Santa Cruz County, one third are elected officials representing local cities and the County Board of Supervisors, and one third are representatives from diverse areas across the private sector in alignment with the major areas of need in the county. By being responsive and always working through an inclusive perspective, the board takes an approach that shifts the way critical issues are addressed in the county.



To learn more about how the Santa Cruz Community Action Board is addressing key issues and ensuring equitable decision-making, listen to our latest podcast episode. In this episode, we dive into how the tripartite board considers all opinions when making equity-based decisions, and explore the top concerns raised by low-income residents and board members. Click here to hear from community leaders and board members about the impactful work being done to drive positive change in Santa Cruz.

