



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PANEL**

**Friday, January 23, 2026**

**Panel Members**

Rebecca Bettencourt  
Chair

Dee Dee Myers  
*Ex-Officio* Member

Rick Smiles  
Member

Gretchen Newsom  
Member

Doug Tracy  
Member

Derek Kirk  
Member

Jennifer Fothergill  
Member

Mike Greenlee  
Member

**Executive Staff**

Jessica Grimes  
Executive Director

Kumani Armstrong  
Assistant Director/Chief Counsel

Peter Cooper  
Assistant Director/Senior Advisor

Laura Campbell  
Chief Deputy Director

Tara Armstrong  
Deputy Director of Technical Branch

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PANEL  
CalEPA Coastal Room  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Friday, January 23, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR BETTENCOURT**

Chair Bettencourt called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Present:

Rebecca Bettencourt  
Rick Smiles  
Gretchen Newsom  
Jennifer Fothergill  
Derek Kirk  
Mike Greenlee  
Douglas Tracy

Executive Staff Present:

Jessica Grimes, Executive Director  
Kumani Armstrong, Assistant Director/Chief Counsel  
Peter Cooper, Assistant Director/Senior Advisor  
Laura Campbell, Chief Deputy Director  
Tara Armstrong, Deputy Director of Technical Branch  
Jana Lazarewicz, Chief of Program Operations

**ACTION TO APPROVE JANUARY PANEL MEETING AGENDA**

The January Panel Meeting Agenda was reviewed.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve the January Panel Meeting Agenda.  
Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

## **ACTION TO APPROVE DECEMBER 2025 PANEL MEETING MINUTES**

The December 2025 Panel Meeting Minutes included in the Panel Packet were reviewed.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve the December 2025 Panel Meeting Minutes. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 6 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye

Rick Smiles – aye

Gretchen Newsom – aye

Jennifer Fothergill – aye

Derek Kirk – abstained

Mike Greenlee – aye

Douglas Tracy – aye

## **EXECUTIVE REPORT**

Good morning, and happy Friday, everyone!

Welcome to our first panel meeting of 2026, our sixth for the 2025–26 fiscal year.

Before I begin my report, I wanted to share that Panel Member Mike Hill has stepped down from the panel, and we already miss him. I believe I can speak on behalf of the panel members, stakeholders, and staff that he has been invaluable to both the panel and the policy committee, but of course, wish him well.

As mentioned in previous meetings, ETP has two upcoming funding opportunities:

The first is the SEED 3 (Social Entrepreneurs for Economic Development) program that will provide \$7.5 million to support immigrant and limited English proficient (LEP) entrepreneurs who face employment barriers as well as worker co-ops. The Solicitation for Proposal (SFP) will be open from January 26th through February 26th.

The second funding opportunity is the Paid Family Leave (PFL) Small Business Grant, which is in its fourth round, and will be up to \$1 million to help California small businesses offset training costs when employees are on PFL. The Solicitation for Proposal (SFP) will be open January 26th through February 13th.

For additional information, including application details and orientation registration, please visit our website and navigate to Grant Funds under Funding Opportunities.

### **Proposal Highlights**

Now, for this panel meeting, we have 1 amendment and 26 proposals submitted for review. If approved, ETP will disburse approximately \$5.6 million dollars:

- 50% are from new contactors;

- 50% are from repeat contractors;
- 35% fall within the priority industry sector of manufacturing;
- 23% originate from High Unemployment Areas; AND
- 58% represent small businesses.

Speaking of small businesses,

- We have 15 small business projects.
- If approved, they will constitute \$2,715,750 in funding to support 2,126 trainees.

Today's proposals will be presented for review and action by Jana Lazarewicz and Heather Miguel.

### **Presentations**

Additionally, ETP staff will share three presentations today:

- First, Jana Lazarewicz will present the Policy Committee's recommendation regarding updates to the MEC Participating Employer (PE) demand list and request the Panel to approve the recommended additions.
- Next, Lis Testa will present the revised CNA to LVN guidelines for panel approval.
- To conclude the presentations, Jana Lazarewicz will provide an informational update on a temporary pause in the Cal-E-Force application submittals.

### **LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

We are in the second year of our 2025-26 legislative session.

In the panel packet, the first few pages are a recap from Year One and include the bills that were vetoed and chaptered.

The last day for introduction of bills is February 20, 2026, so the next report should be more robust.

If there are any bills that the Panel wants the Legal Unit to track, just drop us an e-mail, and we'll make sure that it gets included.

### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

#### **Regarding Funding**

- Today's Panel Meeting is for approximately \$5.6 million dollars.
  - That includes 12 approved delegation orders for a total of \$652,672.
- Delegation Orders are Proposals capped at \$75,000 and approved under delegated authority by the Director on a continuous flow basis.
- If all the proposals scheduled for today's Panel meeting are approved, the Panel will fund 26 projects for a total of \$5,606,730.

## **Regarding Demand**

We have 213 applications in demand:

- 92 applications are currently in development.
- 31 applications are in eligibility review.
- 90 submitted applications are pending review.

## **Regarding Allocations**

Including today's proposals, we will have approved 224 contracts for a total of \$65.2 million, which is 64% of the total allocation for the 2025-26 fiscal year. Together, these proposals are projected to train 57,984 workers in various industries across California.

## **ACTION ON PROPOSALS**

### **Single Employer Contracts**

#### **Tab No. 1: Bellows Plumbing, Heating & Air, Inc.**

Panel thanked Contractor for higher wages in the construction industry.

Panel questioned the higher number proposed for production lab hours, which was 40 hours for 70 workers.

Chelsea Schlunt explained that what they do is complicated. The Bay Area has a lot of old homes, and it's hard to train for that in the office and needs to be done in the field. She shared that the Company's teams are structured where they have a junior person with a lead, and their goal is when the new person comes in, they'll train them in the field with the goal they will get those higher wages and become a lead themselves.

**ACTION:** Member Smiles moved to approve Bellows Plumbing, Heating & Air, Inc. in the amount of \$315,840. Member Greenlee Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye

Rick Smiles – aye

Gretchen Newsom – aye

Jennifer Fothergill – aye

Derek Kirk – aye

Mike Greenlee – aye

Douglas Tracy – aye

#### **Tab No. 2: CALSPEC Enterprises, Inc. dba California Bath Restoration**

Withdrawn

**Tab No. 3: Cover Technologies, Inc.**

Panel commented on the Company's aggressive training plan, essentially training all employees while growing, and asked how they'd make the time to train 200 hours over a two-year period on top of having a temp to perm component and building homes at the same time.

Alexis Rivas stated that with its homes, Cover Technologies, Inc. takes care of the entire process from start to finish, such as permitting, engineering, design, manufacturing, transport, and assembly. It has found that with the installation part alone, the Company takes approximately 600 hours of training to get to the state where it can operate fairly independently. Additionally, he shared that Cover Technologies, Inc. have doubled its team size last year and wants to accelerate that and create more dedicated time to training.

Panel had questions whether some of the training could fall under Productive Lab, since all the proposed training was currently under classroom or virtual instructor-led training.

Berenice Campos exclaimed that they normally scheduled two-to-four-hour blocks of time where employees are doing classroom training or shadowing and following in a classroom format with skill matrices. They would then go into the Company's R&D space and do an installation or take something apart.

Panel felt that it still sounded like the Company could benefit from Productive Lab hours and wanted to make sure they were successful. Panel further inquired about the 600 hours previously mentioned and whether the Company was asking Panel to cover the portion that happens in the classroom.

Alexis Rivas confirmed that and stated that the Company wants to accelerate the quality side of the learning by not doing it in the field but doing it in their 20,000 square foot R&D facility under close supervision.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve Cover Technologies, Inc. in the amount of \$392,000. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Tab No. 4: Holder's Air Conditioning & Heating, Inc. dba Holders Air Conditioning & Heating, Frontier Plumbing**

Withdrawn

**Tab No. 5: HP Hood LLC**

Panel inquired about the sizable jump from one contract to another.

Contractor shared the Company is building a new warehouse that will be adjacent to their property. It will be double the size of what its warehouse currently is, so they'll be able to produce more products. Additionally, HP Hood LLC is building a stand-alone blow mold building which will be able to produce its own bottles, which will help the Company with the vendors it currently has. Lastly, it is putting in a new HTST machine which is a processing machine for milk.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve HP Hood LLC in the amount of \$495,040. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Tab No. 6: Mariani Nut Company**

Withdrawn

**Tab No. 7: MBKT Corp. dba Pacific Coast Home Services**

Withdrawn

**Tab No. 8: REACH Air Medical Services, LLC**

Jana Lazarewicz brought to Panel's attention a correction to the Veterans narrative that should include the Company's recruitment plan also includes participation in the Transition Assistance Program and the Department of Defense Skill Bridge Program.

Panel asked how Contractor heard of ETP.

Contractor shared that he learned about ETP through the Company's tax director, and the director told him to come speak to ETP.

Panel thanked Contractor for the higher wage range for the Paramedics specifically and appreciated the participation in the Skill Bridge Program with Department of Defense.

**ACTION:** Member Smiles moved to approve REACH Air Medical Services, LLC in the amount of \$598,780. Member Kirk Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Tab No. 9: Taylor-Listug, Inc. dba Taylor Guitars**

Panel had concerns over the 87 Production Staff that were stuck in the middle column in a wage range of \$20.00-\$25.00 an hour and inquired about how the Company anticipated moving them into the third column of above \$25.00 per hour.

Richard Salvi stated that over the last couple of years, the Company had developed a career roadmap, so through training and skill development, trainees would move through a tiered system of wages. Trainees would also have annual performance reviews, however, trainees could move through the tiers and career paths at any time.

Panel asked about how much the Company anticipated the wages increasing.

Richard Salvi said it was a range. Some people could get to the top of their tier within a year or two, and others may need a little more coaching, but it was really performance based.

**ACTION:** Member Kirk moved to approve Taylor-Listug, Inc. dba Taylor Guitars in the amount of \$414,540. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Tab No. 10: Vann Brothers**

Panel questioned the fact that 35 people were being compensated less than \$20.00 an hour, and 25 Orchard Staff were between \$20.00-\$25.00 per hour. They asked how the Company could anticipate increasing these people's wages.

Marlene Velasquez stated that when employees start, they have a performance evaluation at 30 days, and then an opportunity for a 1-5% increase, and then there is an annual performance review for another opportunity for an additional 1-5% increase. She also shared that Vann Brothers was bringing in more automation, so there would be more opportunity for advancement as more trainings and technologies were being brought in.

Panel still had concerns over the wages, as after quick calculations, someone who was coming in at \$18.00 an hour, would be at just a 90 cent raise if they maxed out at the 5% increase, which was still not enough to survive in California. Panel instructed Marlene Velasquez to move the wages higher as the Company proceeded forward.

Panel also commented on Vann Brothers' prior projects, achieving just 64% and 88%, and asked how this time around would be different.

Marlen Velasquez explained that the Company has had changes within the departments that were overseeing the management of the program as well as in its orchard operations. They now have a better method of tracking the training.

Panel asked the subcontractor what would be different and how they would be aiding the Company this time around.

Subcontractor said they felt that the last time, Vann Brothers had a lot of internal changes, and the people monitoring the project internally took their eye off the ball a little. Additionally, the Company probably asked for more than it should have. Subcontractor then shared that after Marlene came in, Vann Brothers straightened up a bit, but still went ahead and right-sized their requested funding amount and hours.

Panel stated that since Subcontractor would be getting 13% of the earned amount that they should step up more.

**ACTION:** Member Smiles moved to approve Vann Brothers in the amount of \$166,600. Member Kirk Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye

Douglas Tracy – aye

**Tab No. 11: Wilbur Curtis Co., Inc.**

Wilbur Curtis Co., Inc. presented its proposal to Panel.

Panel had no questions or comments.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve Wilbur Curtis Co., Inc. in the amount of \$124,320. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye

Rick Smiles – aye

Gretchen Newsom – aye

Jennifer Fothergill – aye

Derek Kirk – aye

Mike Greenlee – aye

Douglas Tracy – aye

**Multiple Employer Contracts**

**Tab No. 12: First Software USA dba Oxford Institute of Technology**

Withdrawn

**Tab No. 13: Professionals in Human Resources Association**

Panel inquired about the Company's previous audit findings.

Liliana Argüello stated that the Company is more focused and working closely with its contacts to make sure people are qualified correctly.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve Professionals in Human Resources Association in the amount of \$849,928. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye

Rick Smiles – aye

Gretchen Newsom – aye

Jennifer Fothergill – aye

Derek Kirk – aye

Mike Greenlee – aye

Douglas Tracy – aye

**Tab No. 14: South County Economic Development Council**

South County Economic Development Council presented its proposal to Panel.

Panel had no questions or comments.

**ACTION:** Member Smiles moved to approve South County Economic Development Council in the amount of \$180,930. Member Newsom Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Amendments**

**Tab No. 15: Advanced Integrated Pest Management**

Heather Miguel stated the Company was requesting to add up to \$4.55 in bonuses and commissions to meet the post-retention wage.

Panel had concerns over wage compensation that was based off bonuses, as it doesn't provide a stable set wage that the worker can rely on, and asked Contractor to speak on the Company's compensation practices and how its workers are doing.

Contractor explained that Advanced Integrated Pest Management's technicians are given an hourly wage and then also do production. Therefore, if someone has pest control in their home, you would pay a revenue based on your services, and the technician would perform those services, and receive a bonus for that service every single pay period. Contractor also shared that she has done analysis over the years and the average hourly rate based on the hours the technicians worked was \$15.00 an hour that they receive in that production bonus.

Panel wanted to confirm that since the technicians had a base wage of \$20.00 an hour with a \$15.00 per hour bonus, that would mean the technicians would be receiving \$35.00 an hour.

Contractor confirmed that.

Panel asked for clarification that if all the technicians were receiving a production bonus of some sort, why the bonus wasn't added to their wage.

Contractor shared that the Company has done an hourly model before and when looking at the rates in the area, it has been between \$23-\$24.00 an hour for a service technician, and Advanced Integrated Pest Management has found the hourly model led to a decrease in production, and saw the employees were much more motivated with the production based model.

Panel asked for further clarification that the reason the amendment was being put forward was because when the proposal was originally approved, the Company was using medical benefits to bring them up to the ETP wage, but now it was finding that employees were opting out of medical benefits, and therefore not meeting the post-retention wage.

Heather Miguel confirmed.

Panel was confused why the Company was seeking the \$4.55 with the base wage being a minimum of \$20.00 an hour.

Heather Miguel stated there were some people that the Company thought would elect health benefits which whom didn't or may not be utilizing the full \$2.50 of health benefits.

Panel inquired about the number of people who were truly at the base pay and would rely on the bonus structure to bring them up to the post-retention wage that was approved in 2024.

Contractor stated about 50%.

Panel brought up ETP Regulation 4418(b) that states the Panel may use commission earnings to determine a trainee's hourly wage for services rendered in the sale of goods or services paid to employees whose principal job is sales.

Contractor explained they were not asking for commission but instead, a bonus structure based on production.

Panel asked how many workers were making just the base pay.

Contractor shared that there was no one who wouldn't get a bonus.

Heather Miguel stated that this was a project that had the Job Creation program component which was no longer put forward, and part of that was a lower wage to encourage job creation. Now, the Company was backing into the commission structure.

Panel questioned the estimated 39 people under Job Creation and asked about the number of trainees using commission that would be job creation versus incumbent workers.

Heather Miguel clarified that the bonus and commission structure was only requested for Job Number 1 for Sales and Field Technicians.

Michael Cable asked whether the Company had an employee handbook or written policy that described what the payment structure was.

Contractor said there was a handbook and pay plan structures with examples and worksheets for all the employees.

Panel inquired about the average rate that these individuals would be taking home on an annual basis.

Contractor shared most of their technicians made anywhere between \$23.00 to \$38.00 an hour.

**ACTION:** Member Kirk moved to approve the request for an amendment by Advanced Integrated Pest Management as presented. Member Smiles Seconded. Panel Members voted in the affirmative for approval of the amendment as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 5 to 2.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – nay  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – nay

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Policy Committee: Review and Action on PE Demand**

Jana Lazarewicz stated that ETP Policy Committee has been working on updating the MEC applications to ensure all necessary information is included for Panel’s review. At the August 2025 Policy Committee meeting, Committee discussed new indicators for the Participating Employer (PE) Demand List to address gaps. At the December 2025 Policy Committee meeting, Committee recommended a revision to the PE Demand List prototype and recommended the addition of two items, the first being a notification of inclusion statement, and second, being an industry drop down list.

She was there to get a panel vote to approve the Policy Committee’s recommendations.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve the changes to the PE Demand List. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye

Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Memo and Action Item: Approve Revised CNA to LVN Guidelines**

Lis Testa shared that at the last Policy Committee meeting in December, Committee reviewed the CNA to LVN Guidelines and changed a few things. There was a general cleanup for grammar and formatting, the removal of a floating reference to productive lab, and a simplification of the reimbursement requirements to match the standard ETP reimbursement scheme.

She requested an action item to approve the revised CNA to LVN Guidelines.

**ACTION:** Member Newsom moved to approve the changes to the CNA to LVN Guidelines. Member Smiles Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative for approval as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye  
Rick Smiles – aye  
Gretchen Newsom – aye  
Jennifer Fothergill – aye  
Derek Kirk – aye  
Mike Greenlee – aye  
Douglas Tracy – aye

**Temporary Pause on Application Submittals Presentation**

Jana Lazarewicz presented the memo included in the Panel Packet concerning this item.

This item is for informational purposes only and no action is required.

The Employment Training Panel (ETP) will temporarily pause the Cal-E-Force (CEF) system from accepting new funding applications on April 23, 2026, until May 1, 2026.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PANEL MEMBERS TO REQUEST AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE PANEL MEETING**

No comments.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Phillip Herrera wanted to personally thank and recognize Mike Hill for his service on Panel.

## **MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Bettencourt asked for motion to adjourn the Panel meeting.

**ACTION:** Member Smiles moved to adjourn the Panel meeting. Member Greenlee Seconded. All Panel Members present voted in the affirmative to adjourn the Panel meeting as moved.

Motion carried by roll call vote, 7 to 0.

Rebecca Bettencourt – aye

Rick Smiles – aye

Gretchen Newsom – aye

Jennifer Fothergill – aye

Derek Kirk – aye

Mike Greenlee – aye

Douglas Tracy – aye

Chair Bettencourt Adjourned the meeting at 11:04 a.m.