

6 ‘Key Industries’ ID’d to Fuel South County Economic Resurgence

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UTC Aerospace Systems associate engineer Clare McGlory explains how a nacelle works to a young attendee at the Festival of Science & Engineering in San Diego. UTC builds aircraft nacelles in Chula Vista. Photo courtesy UTC

South San Diego County’s economic growth over the next five years depends on supporting the expansion of six key industries and ensuring there is a trained workforce for them, a consultant told community leaders Tuesday.

Cecilia V. Estolano of [Estolano LeSar Perez Advisors](#) presented what she called “a unified vision of South County” over the next five years, identifying the key industries and outlining steps to support them.

The study was commissioned by the [South County Economic Development Council](#) as part of a visioning process. It was based in part on a survey of more than 4,500 community leaders and private citizens in South County. The report

was released at a public presentation at the Chula Vista Library.

The six key industries identified in the study are:

- Aerospace
- Advanced manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Food processing and distribution
- Maritime-related industries
- Tourism

Of all of these industries, Estolano said, aerospace and the closely-related advanced manufacturing sector have the greatest potential because of high wages and continual innovation. She noted that starting wages in advanced manufacturing processes can be as high as \$31 per hour.

“Aerospace is important because it takes skill. If you want to keep this industry, you have to make sure your workforce development system...is actually meeting the needs,” she said.

Estolano said South County leaders should support specialized training at [Southwestern College](#), consider establishing a polytechnical school and four-year university, encourage improvements to cross-border transportation and focus on the growing area of eco-tourism.

A key advantage in South County is space to expand, she said, both for existing companies and new ones, inland and along the coast. Improvements to Brown Field and the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa ports of entry are also important.

She said a wide range of public and private partners must work together in South County to achieve the vision of economic growth. “It only happens if we have partnerships — partnerships from across the spectrum,” she told the community leaders.

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