

# Workforce, not jobs, remains big issue with area unemployment

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Yuba-Sutter's unemployment rate showed improvement toward the end of 2017 compared to the same months from the year prior.

Not only that, but the area ranked in the top 10 in the country for small metropolitan areas in terms of economic development, according to a Milken Institute index.

But local officials say the main problem with the local economy isn't a lack of jobs, but a lack of workers ... or the right kind of workers.

"Our biggest struggle continues to be with the workforce," said Brynda Stranix, president and COO of the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corp. "It's not that we have a lack of jobs. We have a lack of skilled, trained and available workforce."

Stranix said industries like agriculture are becoming more high-tech, medical technologies in the area are growing, and more and more private contractors that work with Beale Air Force Base are popping up – all of which are contributing to local growth. But workers need additional skills.

"We have a lot of jobs that we are having a difficult time filling," Stranix said. "Jobs ranging from entry-level positions – areas like retail and restaurants – all the way up to professional positions."

Heather Murray, lead business workforce specialist for Sutter County One Stop, said because of the workforce shortage, more and more employers are willing to hire individuals while they are still in training. Some industries will even consider hiring an employee without training and do it themselves.

"I hear more and more, especially in the medical field, employers would prefer having students right out of the gate to train them how they want so the employee doesn't pick up any bad habits from a previous employer," Murray said.

Murray said some of the most sought-after positions locally include truck drivers, certified nursing assistants, RNs, industrial mechanics, welders, contractors, and people with knowledge about software programs like Quickbooks and Excel for accounting positions.

And it's not just employers who are having trouble finding potential employees. Employment agencies, which help employers find employees, are struggling as well.

“We have felt this shortage of skilled workers for the last couple years,” said Phil Feser, director of recruiting, marketing and e-commerce for Rush Personnel.

Feser said many of the industries in need might not be the most appealing to some of the younger generation – 18-25 years old – but are important to the North State’s economy.

“The demand is there,” Feser said. “There is no shortage of openings. It’s just a matter of finding the workers to fill the position.”

### **Most recent unemployment figures for Yuba-Sutter**

In December 2017, Yuba-Sutter had an unemployment rate of 8.1 percent, which was an improvement from the year prior (a 9.4 percent rate in December 2016) but still lagged behind state and national rates – 4.2 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively.

Sutter County’s rate was 8.8 percent, ranking it 52nd in the state. Yuba County fared slightly better at 6.9 percent, or 45th in the state.

That number comes after a November unemployment rate that proved to be the area’s lowest for that month in nearly two decades.

“The unemployment rate released last month for the Yuba City Metropolitan Statistical Area (Yuba and Sutter counties) of 7.1 percent was the lowest that it has been for November going back to records from 2000,” said Elizabeth Bosley, a labor market consultant for the Employment Development Department.

Colusa County had a 17.3 percent unemployment rate in December, ranking it 57th out of 58 counties.