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East County Economic Development Council Names Matt Sanford Chief Executive Officer Following National Search

Regional economic development leader brings nearly two decades of experience to guide East County growth and community initiatives

EL CAJON, CA — February 26, 2026— The East County Economic Development Council (ECEDC) has appointed Matt Sanford, a longtime regional economic development leader, as its new Chief Executive Officer following a nationwide search conducted in partnership with executive search firm Blair Search Partners.

The competitive recruitment effort drew more than 300 applicants from across the country. After an extensive evaluation process, ECEDC's Executive Search Committee and Board of Directors selected Sanford to lead the organization as it continues advancing business growth, workforce development, and regional economic competitiveness throughout East San Diego County.

Prior to accepting the position, Sanford served as Economic Development Director for the City of Carlsbad, where he led business attraction and retention strategies, economic planning initiatives, and departmental operations overseeing a \$1.13 million annual budget.

Earlier in his career, Sanford spent eight years as Senior Director of Economic Development for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, managing regional initiatives, public-private partnerships, and grant-funded programs supporting innovation and industry growth across the region.

As an East County resident with strong ties to the region, Sanford has collaborated with local governments, employers, and regional organizations on initiatives aimed at strengthening economic opportunity and long-term competitiveness.

"We are confident that Matt brings the experience, leadership, and regional perspective essential to lead ECEDC into its next chapter," said Jo Peterson, ECEDC Co-Chair. "His strategic vision and collaborative approach will help strengthen our impact across East County."

"Matt's deep regional relationships and understanding of economic development will enable ECEDC to broaden its positive impact on East County businesses and communities," added John Olsen, ECEDC Co-Chair. "We are excited about the direction and momentum he brings to the organization."



San Diego East County Economic Development Council

Sanford is widely recognized for advancing cross-jurisdictional economic initiatives supporting key sectors including defense, technology, and life sciences. His work includes helping develop

collaborative regional partnerships such as *Innovate78* and securing investment resources supporting business expansion and job creation across San Diego County.

“I am honored to join the East County Economic Development Council and work alongside partners committed to strengthening East County’s economy,” Sanford said. “I look forward to building on ECEDC’s strong foundation while expanding opportunities that support businesses, workforce development, and community prosperity.”

Sanford will assume the CEO role on March 23, 2026 succeeding James Sly, who transitioned to serve as Chief Executive Officer of the Grossmont Healthcare District after leading ECEDC through a period of organizational growth and expanded regional collaboration.

About the East County Economic Development Council

The East County Economic Development Council is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing business retention, expansion, and workforce development across East San Diego County. Through partnerships among industry, education, government, and community organizations, ECEDC works to strengthen regional competitiveness and economic opportunity.