

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### *San Juan EDC Knowledge Worker Network initiative 2019 wrap-up*

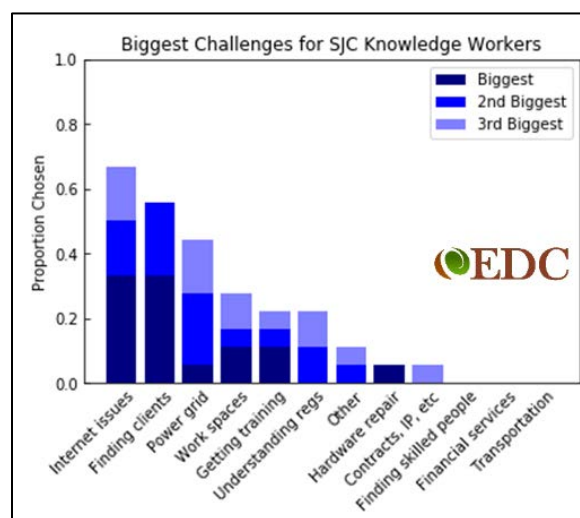
The San Juan County Economic Development Council (EDC) is proud to announce the successful launch of the Knowledge Worker Network initiative started in 2019. Last year, the EDC worked to build out a new program to support San Juan County residents who work primarily with information – “knowledge workers” – by providing them a network for collaboration and the beginnings of a cohesive marketing and business-to-business platform.

Such knowledge workers include computer programmers, data analysts and statisticians, writers and editors, web and graphic designers, and many other professions. These highly skilled professions bring income into the county while supporting local businesses, and they have a small resource footprint so they can provide environmentally sustainable, year-round, high-wage jobs.

San Juan County’s knowledge workers are often isolated as individual remote workers, freelancers, or small consultancies, yet projects that require one type of knowledge work typically require other types as well. The EDC’s goal of building connections among the County’s knowledge workers can help people get the skills, leads, and partnerships they need to succeed. The knowledge worker network can also benefit local brick-and-mortar businesses by making it easier to find local talent.

In late 2018 and early 2019, the EDC held information-gathering meetings around the county to determine the needs of local knowledge workers, and sent out a survey to identify needs and interests. At the meetings, on the survey, and elsewhere, locals expressed great enthusiasm for the creation of a network to support knowledge workers. Participants rated infrastructure issues and finding clients as their biggest challenges in the county.

During 2019, the EDC held subsequent get-togethers around the county, including their first-ever group meeting on the inter-island ferry, to help people meet one-on-one and make new connections. Additionally, they held an informative panel discussion on business development for freelancers and consultants in November, featuring local business owners Mary Ann Sircely, James Bach, and Selby Lighthill.



To encourage interactions across islands and to increase participation, the EDC created an online discussion group on the Slack platform, hosting online meetings so that all knowledge workers could participate. Additionally, to help people find local experts, the EDC launched a knowledge worker directory website this past fall at [www.islandsknowledge.org](http://www.islandsknowledge.org). Finally, to build connections between brick-and-mortar businesses and local knowledge workers the EDC held a cross-

industry symposium including local businesses such as Island Air, Luxel, Pelindaba Lavender, Roche Harbor Resort, San Juan Canvas, SIN Motolabs, and Windermere Real Estate San Juan Island.

In the upcoming year, the EDC will continue working to make San Juan County a place where information-focused businesses can thrive, including follow up assessment surveys, workshops, and events.

The EDC's ongoing Knowledge Worker Network Initiative is supported by San Juan County, the Town of Friday Harbor, and the Port of Friday Harbor. For more information, please contact Mickey von Dassow at the EDC: 360-378-2906.

*The San Juan County Economic Development Council (EDC) strives to strengthen and diversify the economy of San Juan County. We believe a strong economy builds a strong community.*

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