FINAL REPORT · UPLIFT CENTRAL COAST · CATALYST PROGRAM

Advancing the California Central Coast AAM Ecosystem

















DART | Uplift Central Coast | CALIFORNIA JOBS FIRST

SUBMITTED BY DART · DRONES, AVIATION, AND ROBOTICS TECHNOLOGY · **OCTOBER 2026**

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Attachments

Attachment A: News Article: *AMT Apprenticeship Program Launches, Marking a Major Investment in Monterey Bay's Aviation Workforce*, DART, **January 29, 2026**

Attachment B: 2026 LIFT Summit Summary Paper, DART, **August 2026**

Attachment C: Monterey-San Jose Air Taxi Case Study, DART, **August 2026**

Attachment D: 2024-2026 Monterey Bay Tech Hub, Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) Impact Report, DART, **October 2026**

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1. Executive Summary

Uplift Central Coast's $300,000 Catalyst award, made through California Jobs First, enabled Monterey Bay DART to launch a new aviation apprenticeship, sustain the region's AAM infrastructure coalition, publish the first air taxi case study for the region, and open California's flagship AAM summit to community members and students. Each investment produced measurable results.

Table 1. Catalyst Results at a Glance

Work stream	Catalyst investment	Headline results
AMT Apprenticeship with Joby Aviation	$118,560	3 local apprentices hired; 1 FAA A&P certificate earned in 8 months; 2 of 3 apprentices promoted into skilled roles at Joby; backfill hire approved
Monterey Bay Tech Hub Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) and MRY-SJC Case Study	$53,760	25 member organizations; 16 monthly meetings (of 28 since 2024); $7.45 million in state CAAMCI funding coordinated; 10 national expert presentations; first regional air taxi case study published
2026 LIFT Summit	$33,500	257 attendees; 22 sponsors; 17 panels and keynotes over 3 days; 10 fully funded community and student scholarships

Together, these work streams connected local residents to high-wage aviation careers, positioned the Monterey Bay Region to compete for and win state infrastructure dollars, and gave regional stakeholders critical data to prepare for early commercial air taxi service.

2. Catalyst Investment Overview

Through the California Jobs First framework administered by the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), Uplift Central Coast selected DART as a Catalyst awardee with a $300,000 investment. DART directed the funds to three program areas that build on one another:

- **Workforce:** a paid, earn-and-learn Aircraft Maintenance Technician (AMT) apprenticeship at Joby Aviation for Monterey Bay residents.
- **Infrastructure and planning:** facilitation of the Monterey Bay Tech Hub Infrastructure Working Group and research for the Monterey-San Jose (MRY-SJC) Air Taxi Case Study.
- **Convening and access:** the 2026 LIFT Summit, including 10 scholarships that brought community members and students into the room with national industry and policy leaders.

An additional $58,560 funded personnel to support the implementation of each program's activities, and $35,620 strengthened DART's reporting systems and financial audit readiness, supporting sound stewardship of these and future public investments.

3. AMT Apprenticeship with Joby Aviation

Catalyst investment: $118,560. Within its first year, the DART-funded apprenticeship produced an FAA-certified technician and two promotions from a cohort of three, and Joby has approved a new hire for the program.

The Aircraft Maintenance Technician (AMT) Apprenticeship launched at Joby Aviation on November 17, 2025. It is an 18-month, earn-and-learn program: apprentices are paid while completing hands-on, on-the-job training aligned with the FAA Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) certification exams. The program was deliberately started with a small cohort to refine curriculum, mentorship, wage progression, and certification alignment before scaling.

Program Metrics

Table 2. AMT Apprenticeship Program Metrics

Metric	Result
Program launch	November 17, 2025
Apprentices in first cohort	3, all from the Monterey Bay region
FAA A&P certificates earned	1
Fastest completion	8 months (against an 18-month design)
Apprentices promoted into skilled roles	2 of 3
New apprentice hire approved	1 (backfill, posting live within days)

Participant Outcomes

Table 3. AMT Apprenticeship Participant Outcomes

Apprentice	Outcome
Participant 1	Completed the apprenticeship in 8 months, drawing on prior military aircraft maintenance experience, and earned his FAA A&P certificate. Promoted to Maintenance Technician in Joby's Training and Workforce Development department, maintaining Joby Academy's Van's RV-12 aircraft. Will move to Joby's Aircraft Maintenance team to work on the Joby S4 electric aircraft in the coming months.
Participant 2	After 8 months in the apprenticeship, accepted a position as Aircraft Final Integration Technician on Joby's manufacturing team. The skills gained in the program produced the qualifications for this highly skilled role.
Participant 3	Continuing in the apprenticeship.

Demand and growth. Joby reports very high internal and external demand for the backfill position and expects a robust applicant pool. Future plans include expanding to a larger cohort using the lessons of this pilot.

A connected pathway. The apprenticeship links directly to DART's Airplane Build Lab with Pajaro Valley Unified School District, where high school students build the same aircraft that Joby technicians maintain, and pilot trainees use for flight school. The Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative also supports the AMT program; it is the first and only apprenticeship model among the Collaborative's 10 funded pathways for recent graduates.

Proven partnership. The AMT program builds on DART and Joby's Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Program (AMAP), launched in 2022 with the James Irvine Foundation. AMAP has graduated more than 200 apprentices with a retention rate above 90%, and its graduates make up about one-fifth of Joby's Marina manufacturing workforce.

> *"I didn't even know this kind of career was an option. To be able to earn a paycheck, learn directly on the job, and work with a company like Joby Aviation is something I'm incredibly grateful for. It opened a door I didn't know existed."*
>
> **AMT Apprentice, First Cohort (Attachment A)**

4. Monterey Bay Tech Hub Infrastructure Working Group

Catalyst investment: $53,760 (shared with the MRY-SJC Case Study). The IWG, facilitated by DART since March 2024, grew into the coordinating body behind a $7.45 million state infrastructure award and the region's main channel into state and federal AAM planning.

The IWG convenes airport managers, state agencies, AAM companies, and research institutions monthly to coordinate infrastructure and workforce investment across the Central Coast.

Program Metrics

Table 4. Infrastructure Working Group Metrics

Metric	Result
Active member organizations	25
Monthly meetings held	16 (of 28 since 2024)
State funding coordinated (CAAMCI, awarded August 2025)	$7.45 million
Informational presentations by national AAM leaders and the FAA	10
Public comments submitted on behalf of members	2 (SB 800 AAM Work Plan, January 2026; FAA Airport Improvement Program Handbook, August 2026)
Airport and test range members	11, from San Jose through San Luis Obispo County

Key Outcomes

- **California Advanced Air Mobility Corridors Initiative (CAAMCI).** In August 2025, the state awarded $7.45 million to the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) on behalf of the Monterey Bay Tech Hub for AAM planning and infrastructure at Watsonville, Marina, Salinas, and Hollister municipal airports.
- **Direct access to industry and regulators.** Ten presentations brought leaders from SkyDrive, Siemens, Joby Aviation, ResilienX, Wisk, the FAA, Critical Loop, Thales, BETA Technologies, and ANRA Technologies to IWG members.
- **A growing footprint.** Members span airports, industry, state agencies (GO-Biz, Caltrans Division of Aeronautics), and research institutions (UC Santa Cruz, Naval Postgraduate School). Airports from the San Francisco Bay Area and broader Central Coast have recently joined to align with Monterey Bay activity.

- **A replicable model.** In January 2026, B3K contracted DART to facilitate a Kern County AAM working group modeled on this work, completing a strategic roadmap in June 2026.

> *"A key to our success in this space is membership in the IWG and engagement with on-going meetings and collaboration with collective talents of the participants."*
>
> **Rayvon Williams, Airport Director, Watsonville Municipal Airport (Attachment D)**
>
> *"The IWG is an important element in maintaining an awareness of current work and trends as well as a look ahead to emerging needs and activities."*
>
> **Matthew Friedman, Chief, Office of Aviation Planning, Caltrans Division of Aeronautics (Attachment D)**

5. Monterey-San Jose Air Taxi Case Study

Funded within the $53,760 IWG investment. Published in August 2026, the case study is the region's first data-based look at early commercial electric air taxi service, and it found that an MRY-SJC flight would be up to four times faster than driving and cut per-passenger emissions by two-thirds compared with a typical gas vehicle.

The study models Joby Aviation's S4 aircraft on a 67-mile route between Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) and San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC), compared against ridesharing and household vehicles. It analyzed four flight paths (one visual, three instrument), five years of weather data at both airports, and current energy, cost, and emissions data. IWG members BETA Technologies, Caltrans Division of Aeronautics, Joby Aviation, Monterey Regional Airport, Salinas Municipal Airport, San Jose Mineta International Airport, and Skyway Technologies contributed expertise and editorial review.

Key Findings

Table 5. Early-Stage Air Taxi vs. Ground Travel, MRY-SJC

Measure	Air taxi (S4, early-stage route)	Ground travel (76 miles by road)
Travel time	30 minutes	97 minutes free flow; 122 minutes peak hour
Time saved per trip	67 to 92 minutes	
Per-passenger CO2e, average occupancy	17.9 lb (2.3 passengers)	55.4 lb gas vehicle; 8.5 lb electric vehicle (1.5 passengers)
Per-passenger cost	$247 per seat	$39 personal vehicle; $135 standard rideshare; $365 luxury rideshare
Energy per one-way trip	79.7 kWh, about 50% of battery capacity	
Recharge time	15 minutes	

What Planners Learned

- **Operationally feasible today.** The route can be flown on a single charge within FAA reserve requirements, with no mid-route charging infrastructure.
- **Weather is the main reliability factor.** MRY recorded instrument conditions on 149 days per year (40.8% of days), more than four times SJC's 37 days (10.1%). Early service, expected to fly visual rules only, would face delays on those days.

- **Price targets early adopters.** At $247, the fare undercuts on-demand luxury rideshare ($365) but is over six times the cost of driving, pointing to time-sensitive travelers and visitors as the first market.
- **Charging infrastructure sets the pace.** Airport electrical upgrades can take 18 months or more just to install new transformers, so planning should start now.
- **Regional demand base.** Nearly 500,000 residents live within a 15-minute peak-hour drive of SJC and 45,000 of MRY, with Monterey's tourism economy adding visitor demand.

Priorities for further study identified by the IWG: passenger demand modeling, multi-vertiport network planning, evaluation of additional aircraft types, and direct engagement with airports and utilities to add vertiport infrastructure to Airport Layout Plans, which makes it eligible for federal funding.

6. 2026 LIFT Summit

Catalyst investment: $33,500. The 2026 LIFT Summit, California's flagship AAM event, drew 257 attendees to Monterey from March 31 to April 2, 2026, and provided 10 fully funded scholarships so community members and students could take part. Catalyst funding provided roughly 20% of the braided capital that covered Summit expenses, with partners contributing about $4 for every Catalyst dollar.

Event Metrics

Table 6. 2026 LIFT Summit Event Metrics

Metric	Result
Attendees	257
Days of programming	3
Panels and keynotes	17
Sponsors	22, including California Jobs First and Uplift Central Coast (via Catalyst Award)
Fully funded community and student scholarships	10
Site tours	2 (Joby Aviation manufacturing site in Marina; AirSpace Integration coastal test range)
Attendee mix	43% industry, 26% government, 18% academic, 13% nonprofit

Who was in the room. Speakers included the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency, NASA's Director of Aerospace Operations and Safety, USDOT, the FAA, Caltrans, GO-Biz, CARB, PG&E, and leading companies including Joby, Wisk, BETA Technologies, Wing, Siemens, and Thales.

Workforce in focus. DART's panel, *Building the Talent Runway*, presented the K-12-to-employment pipeline this Catalyst award helps build, from Pajaro Valley students building an aircraft to the AMT apprenticeship at Joby. Panels also identified high-voltage battery systems and electric propulsion as the top skill gaps for community college programs.

Actionable intelligence for the region. Sessions surfaced concrete tools for local partners, including:

- PG&E's pending loads framework (December 2025), which lets early AAM projects enter utility planning years before a service application, addressing 3 to 5 year energization delays.
- On-site battery storage through PG&E FlexConnect, which can shorten grid interconnection by up to 18 months.
- A new FAA weather standard expected to cut vertiport weather station costs from $1 million down to about $180,000.
- California financing tools for vertiport and airport electrical upgrades through IBank, GO-Biz, and tax increment financing.

> *"We're at an inflection point, moving from 'if' advanced air mobility will happen to 'how, when, and how fast we make it happen.'"*
>
> **Josh Metz, Executive Director, DART (Attachment B)**

The 2027 LIFT Summit is scheduled for March 23-25, 2027, at the Monterey Marriott.

To learn more, visit **liftsummit.org**.

7. Catalyst in Context

Catalyst outcomes connect to and build on DART's body of work across the Central Coast AAM ecosystem

On their own, the Catalyst results add up: three apprentices, one case study, one summit, and two years of coalition meetings. Alongside DART's other programs, their value compounds: each work stream drew on relationships, programs, and data DART had already built, and fed its results back into the system.

Years of Compounding Work

• 2018

DART founded to build workforce and ecosystem development partnerships by hosting an annual symposium and regular meetups, connecting partners to R&D test sites and facilities, and convening multi-sector stakeholder roundtable discussions and meetings, demonstrating value that led to regional commitments from industry and government

• 2022

AMAP launches with Joby Aviation and the James Irvine Foundation

• 2024

Monterey Bay Tech Hub forms; DART begins facilitating the IWG and publishes SOAR AAM

• 2025

Catalyst award (Feb); Airplane Build CTE program opens (Aug); AMTA launches at Joby (Nov)

• 2026

LIFT Summit (Mar); Kern County adopts the IWG model; MRY-SJC Case Study (Aug)

• 2027

First Airplane Build completers accomplish the pathway; LIFT 2027 (Mar 23-25)

A Foundation Built with the James Irvine Foundation

Community is at the center of every DART program. DART advances the industry so that it grows with the region, not outside of it, creating local, quality jobs and strong economic development outcomes. This community-centered approach aligns with the James Irvine Foundation's mission and is integral to its support of DART. Since 2022, three Irvine grants have built DART's capacity to design programs, build partnerships, and support organizing the region.

The AMT Apprenticeship builds directly on the Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Program (AMAP), which DART co-developed with Joby in 2022, with community-based organizations recruiting candidates new to aerospace. AMAP drew more than 220 applicants for its first 20 seats, produced a 22% median wage gain within a year, and became Joby's primary entry-level hiring pathway. More than 200 apprentices have now completed the program, and they now make up about one-fifth of Joby's Marina manufacturing workforce. Those results, together with DART's regional advocacy, helped Joby secure a $9.8 million CalCompetes grant, which unlocked more than $30 million in new Marina facilities and equipment and a commitment of 690 California jobs.

The same Irvine-supported groundwork (the SOAR AAM readiness assessment, co-founding the Monterey Bay Tech Hub, and facilitating the IWG) gave the region the shared priorities and airport relationships to compete for state funding. The result was the $7.45 million California Advanced Air Mobility Corridors Initiative (CAAMCI) award,

made in August 2025 to MBEP on behalf of the Tech Hub, for Watsonville, Marina, Salinas, and Hollister airports.

One Airfield, One Aircraft, One Pathway

Watsonville Municipal Airport demonstrates how the pieces now meet in one place. Students in the Airplane Build CTE program at Pajaro Valley High School are building a full-scale Van's RV-12 aircraft in the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) hangar. The program grew out of a DART-PVUSD partnership, built on DART's vision for an advanced aviation workforce hub, with support from the James Irvine Foundation. On the same airfield, Catalyst-funded AMT apprentices train with Joby on the same type of aircraft. The airport is also one of the four CAAMCI airports, and its director is an active IWG member. Workforce, education, and infrastructure investments now meet at the same site.

Widening the On-Ramps

Other recent DART programs extend the pathway to more entry points. Through the Maturing small Uncrewed Aerial Systems (MsUAS) Drone Pathways in partnership with Hartnell College, DART is working toward 150 learners and 50 FAA Part 107 certifications across Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey Adult School, Seaside High School, and a Vets to Drones veteran cohort. DART also partners with UC Santa Cruz CITRIS CIDER on implementation of DUCC (Drones Uplifting California Communities), a California Jobs First-funded program; MsUAS also supports local adoption of the DUCC curriculum at Central Coast colleges without duplicating its funding. Drone certification offers a low-barrier first step into aviation for adults, veterans, and students who may later enter the apprenticeships.

How Each Work Stream Builds and Feeds the System

Table 7. Catalyst Work Streams in the Context of DART's Programs

Catalyst work stream	Built on	Strengthened	Leads to
AMT Apprenticeship with Joby Aviation **$118,560**	AMAP, co-developed with Joby; Irvine-funded DART capacity; Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative resources	Gives Airplane Build students a defined destination on the same airfield; USDOL regional visit to the apprentices (June 2026)	Next cohort now recruiting; a registered pre-apprenticeship linking the Airplane Build program to AMTA; measured transitions after the 2026-27 school year
Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) **$53,760 (shared)**	Irvine-supported foundation work: co-founding the Monterey Bay Tech Hub with UC Santa Cruz and MBEP; SOAR AAM readiness assessment	A coordinated regional voice: 28 monthly meetings; 25 member organizations, 11 airports and test ranges; regional input to the CA eIPP; public comments on SB 800 and the FAA AIP Handbook	A forum for members as CAAMCI moves into implementation; Kern County AAM working group built on this model (B3K, 2026); new members from the Bay Area and Central Coast
MRY-SJC Air Taxi Case Study **Within IWG funds**	Expertise from seven IWG members; SOAR AAM baseline; Irvine co-funding	Specific figures for airports, cities, and utilities on travel time, emissions, cost, weather, and charging timelines	Passenger demand modeling, multi-vertiport network planning, and vertiports in Airport Layout Plans for federal eligibility

2026 LIFT Summit **$33,500**	DART's years of convening and relationships with national industry and policy leaders; site access to Joby's Marina facility and the AirSpace Integration test range	National showcase of the K-12-to-employment pathway; skill gaps for college curricula; PG&E and FAA tools for regional airports	LIFT 2027; Technology in the Workforce Summit with Hartnell College (October 29, 2026)

Where the Work Compounds

- **Shared assets are reused.** The partnerships, aircraft, airfield, and data built for one program lower the cost and time to launch the next.
- **Results become evidence.** AMAP outcomes supported CalCompetes; Irvine-supported groundwork positioned the region for CAAMCI; Catalyst outcomes now inform the next round of proposals.
- **Funding is stacked, not duplicated.** AMTA combines Catalyst wages, Irvine-funded capacity, K-16 Collaborative resources, and Joby as an employer.
- **Models travel.** The IWG now has a Kern County counterpart, and the Airplane Build program is preparing to expand to new school districts.

4 Core partners behind the AMT Apprenticeship: Catalyst, Irvine, the K-16 Collaborative, and Joby	**2:1** Joby's match on Irvine-funded AMAP seats, the model the AMT Apprenticeship builds on	**4:1** Partner dollars for each Catalyst dollar at the 2026 LIFT Summit; Catalyst provided roughly 20% of the braided funding	**$313K** PVUSD co-funding, unlocked by the Irvine-funded $150K airplane kit and DART operational support	**$6M → $48M+** Irvine investment since 2022, and the public and private investment that has followed in the region

8. Regional Impact and Looking Ahead

The Catalyst award enabled tangible impact: modest, targeted investments produced career advancement for local residents, strengthened the coalition guiding state infrastructure investment, and built the data and relationships the region needs for the next phase of AAM growth.

Impact Across the Region

- **Jobs:** Monterey Bay residents moved into paid aviation training and then into skilled technician roles at a leading regional employer, through a pathway that now begins in high school.
- **Infrastructure:** The IWG gives regional airports, agencies, and industry a coordinated voice, positioning the Monterey Bay Region to compete for and carry out state and federal AAM infrastructure investment.
- **Planning**: The MRY-SJC case study gives airports, cities, and utilities specific figures on time savings, emissions, cost, weather, and charging needs.
- **Convening**: LIFT kept Monterey at the center of action-oriented national AAM discussion and real implementation planning, and opened those conversations to 10 community and student scholarship recipients.

Lasting Impact

These programs helped establish a durable, place-based pathway from high school to high-wage aviation careers for Central Coast residents, many from communities without prior access to aerospace. Together with a stronger regional coalition and better planning data, it positions the region to capture jobs and investment as the industry moves into commercial operations.

- **For our communities:** The Monterey Bay Region has long relied on agriculture and hospitality. Advanced aviation adds a new source of family-sustaining jobs that are filled locally, so wages and career growth stay in the region. Apprentices are paid while they train, removing a financial barrier that has kept many local residents out of aviation, and they work toward the FAA A&P certificate, a portable, lifelong credential. AMAP's results (Section 7) show what this model can become at scale. Bringing local voices into national conversations helps the industry grow with the region and not outside of it.
- **For industry:** Regional AAM companies already employ thousands of people, and Joby's CalCompetes commitment alone includes 690 California jobs. Each apprentice cohort adds certified technicians to a workforce the industry urgently needs, and skill gaps identified at LIFT, such as high-voltage battery systems and

electric propulsion, are informing renewed community college curricula and other workforce models.

- **For regional systems:** Early planning on long-lead needs, such as airport electrical upgrades that can take 18 months or more, and adding vertiports to Airport Layout Plans for federal funding eligibility, will shorten the path from investment to operations. Both the IWG and the Airplane Build program are already being adopted beyond the region.

Looking Ahead

The next phase is sequencing. DART is building measured transitions from the Airplane Build program, through a community college bridge and a registered pre-apprenticeship, into AMTA and Joby careers. The IWG continues to keep regional airports and partners aligned, and LIFT 2027 will bring the national conversation back to Monterey. California Jobs First investments in Catalyst, DUCC and CAAMCI now reinforce one another in this region, and their combined value will keep growing as the first Airplane Build completers and new apprentices arrive.

> *"It opened a door I didn't know existed."*
> AMT Apprentice, First Cohort

DART extends its sincere gratitude to Uplift Central Coast, GO-Biz, and the California Jobs First program for their investment in advancing an inclusive, regionally rooted advanced aviation economy.

About DART

Monterey Bay Drone, Aviation & Robotics Technology (DART) is a nonprofit founded in 2018 whose mission is to build innovative pathways to meet Advanced Air Mobility's growing workforce needs, support the planning and development of critical infrastructure, and convene stakeholders across industry, government, and education to unlock regional potential for quality jobs and community vitality.

To learn more, visit **mbdart.org**.