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Hiring process begins Monday for Rohnert Park casino positions

Company plans to hire 2,000 permanent workers

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The Graton Resort & Casino is to start interviewing for dealers and security personnel Monday, another sign that the \$800 million project on the outskirts of Rohnert Park is on schedule to open its doors late this year.

Interviews for slot attendants and casino marketing representatives also start Monday, although training for most positions won't start until closer to the casino's opening, officials said.

"There's been a lot of interest, a lot of excitement. ... we think we're going to get terrific applicants," said Valerie Murzl, human resources director at Station Casinos, which will manage the 3,000-slot-machine casino resort owned by the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria.

One gauge of interest: 250 people are enrolled in a school for prospective dealers that began last week. The two-week program continues on a rotating basis until the casino opens.

The process begins with an online application only for the jobs announced. In-person interviews start April 22. The company plans to hire 2,000 permanent workers in areas ranging from maintenance to accounting to gambling-floor staff, the largest category, Murzl said.

That would make it the fourth-largest private employer in the North Bay, behind Kaiser Permanente in Sonoma and Solano counties, and St. Joseph Health, operator of Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital.

"It will be the biggest thing we've had in years in terms of employment impact," said Ben Stone, executive director of the Sonoma County Economic Development Board.

While a Station Casinos executive team of about a dozen people will run the casino, the 2,000 positions will be filled by new employees, Murzl said.

Rohnert Park officials, who often take pains to speak in neutral tones about the casino — a long-divisive issue that led to a 2004 council recall election — also greeted the latest development happily.

"There will definitely be a positive effect from that hiring," Councilwoman Gina Belforte said. "Two thousand jobs is an amazing amount of jobs to come into the city. That's literally twice what we lost with State Farm."

State Farm Insurance shut down its Rohnert Park office in 2011, taking with it 450 jobs.

The tribe's revenue-sharing agreement with the city makes explicit the potential benefit to Rohnert Park, beyond the money the tribe is to pour directly into its



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coffers, by requiring a hiring preference policy for qualified city residents as well as American Indians.

"We want jobs, and my understanding is that they're decent-paying jobs, so that means additional disposable income for people to spend the city," said City Manager Gabe Gonzalez, whose brief includes economic development.

Murzl declined to discuss pay rates at the casino resort — or how many staff are needed in each job category — but under the tribe's agreement with the city, all workers can belong to a union if they choose to.

Dealers typically make \$20 to \$40 an hour including tips, said John Pifer, director of Casino College, which has schools in San Jose, San Carlos, Sacramento and Phoenix.

The local labor pool is expected to meet the casino's hiring needs, Murzl said. "We don't have any concerns or reservations," she said. "We feel very comfortable about it."

She urged people to apply only when the positions they are interested in are posted at GratonResortCasino.com, so as to enable an orderly process.

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