

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT



INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 20th Century, Fresno County's economy has been driven by agriculture and residential development. For most of this period, Fresno County has had the largest agricultural output of any county in the United States. Despite this success, Fresno County's unemployment rate has remained among the highest in California and the county's average wage levels have been low.

To address these chronic problems, Fresno County is taking a leadership role in promoting economic development. The long- and short-term objective of the County is to work with cities, the private sector, and other organizations to create good jobs at a faster rate than population growth to bring Fresno County in line with the rest of California in terms of employment rates and wage levels.

The Economic Development Element is divided into three sections: Job Creation, Economic Base Diversification, and Labor Force Preparedness.

A. JOB CREATION

Numerous agencies are involved in economic development in Fresno County, including County departments, the cities, and a variety of regional planning, marketing, and workforce training organizations. Fresno County's Economic Development Strategy seeks to change the pace and direction of business and employment growth in the county. For this effort, strong leadership and regional partnering and coordination are needed.

The first step in expanding the county's job base is to strengthen the county's historical economic base of agriculture. Technological and marketing advances have opened up new global markets for American produce and Fresno County has an opportunity to expand its markets. It is essential for the county's agricultural economy to remain at the cutting edge in crop selection and growing practices. At the same time, shifts in cropping patterns can have very positive impacts for employment opportunities.

Shifts in consumer preferences and technological advances in food processing have created many new economic opportunities in agriculture. Combined with emerging international markets, the volume demand can support a scale of production well beyond the crop levels produced in Fresno County. Therefore, value-added food processing can become a much stronger industrial sector in the county, creating an increased number of well-paying jobs.

Policies in this section address economic development planning and management, agricultural productivity, and high-value-added agriculture. Related policies are included in Section LU-A, Agriculture; Section LU-E, Non-Agricultural Rural Development; Section LU-F, Urban Development Patterns; and Section LU-G, Incorporated City, City Fringe Area, and Unincorporated Community Development.

Definitions for the Economic Development Element

Industry - A term for the collective activities of a group of firms that produce the same kind of commodity or service, or are engaged in the same kind of operations. The auto industry and the steel industry are examples of industries within the manufacturing sector.

Industry Cluster - The cluster is a geographically proximate group of firms and industries that are interdependent, complementary, and/or competitive. At the core are industries and firms which have a high demand for inputs of materials and services, and their purchase of various inputs then drives the growth and development of supplier industries. Generally, there is a regionally-based economic infrastructure that provides the foundation required by the cluster. This could be a specialized work force, higher education system, etc. The synergies or relations among cluster firms help to spur new innovations and to attract other firms to service or become a part of the core cluster.

Labor Force - The universe for measuring the labor force begins with all persons aged 16 and over. In this report, the labor force includes civilians only (i.e., members of the armed services are excluded). The labor force is further divided into two groups: persons currently employed and persons looking for work (unemployed). The unemployment rate is calculated as a proportion of the civilian labor force that is currently unemployed. Persons not employed and not looking for work are also excluded from the labor force count; they are not counted as unemployed. In this report, labor force is a residence-based measure, while employment is measured at the place of work.

Value-Added - The increase in the value of products over the cost of their raw materials. Higher-value-added products support higher wages and generally return greater economic benefits to the locality in which they are produced.

Goal ED-A To increase job creation through regional leadership, agricultural productivity, and development of high-value-added processing firms.

Policies

Economic Development Planning and Management

- Policy ED-A.1 The County shall provide countywide and regional leadership in economic development and coordination of economic development resources.
- Policy ED-A.2 The County shall allocate staff resources to economic planning within County government and to coordinating the related efforts of the cities and regional organizations.
- Policy ED-A.3 The County shall support and staff an Economic Development Action Team composed of County departments, including the Agricultural Commissioner, city representatives, and regional organizations engaged in the various facets of economic development in the county.
- Policy ED-A.4 The County shall maintain, monitor, and periodically update an Economic Development Strategy, which shall be used as an operational guide to implementing the economic development goals, policies, and programs of the General Plan, as well as fulfilling Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) requirements for a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).
- Policy ED-A.5 The County shall work with the cities and regional agencies to develop a resource allocation program that efficiently and equitably distributes the cost and benefits of economic development to local government jurisdictions in the county. The program should include a countywide capital improvement plan.

- Policy ED-A.6 The County shall cooperate with and assist the Fresno Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the cities, and organizations such as the I-5 Business Development Corridor and Five Cities Consortium with their efforts to foster economic development consistent with the countywide strategy. Such assistance may involve joint sponsorship of funding applications, planning and development of regional infrastructure, coordinated marketing efforts and responses to site location requests, and other activities.
- Policy ED-A.7 The County, working in cooperation with the cities, shall develop criteria for the location in the unincorporated areas of value-added agricultural processing facilities that are compatible with an agricultural setting.
- Policy ED-A.8 The County shall encourage the location of new industry within cities, and unincorporated communities. The County, in cooperation with the cities will identify circumstances for locating industrial uses in other unincorporated areas consistent with the cities' economic development strategies and taking into account opportunities offered by variations in local environmental conditions.
- Policy ED-A.9 The County shall participate in regional business retention and expansion programs, such as the Rapid Response program, to ensure that County services are accessible to businesses in need.
- Policy ED-A.10 The County shall coordinate an initiative for the integration of capital sources into a seamless delivery system.
- Policy ED-A.11 The County shall routinely review the economic impacts of all policy, budgetary, and discretionary project decisions. To that end, staff reports for all discretionary decisions by the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and other County decision-making bodies shall include an analysis of economic impacts along with fiscal impacts.

Agricultural Land Productivity

- Policy ED-A.12 The County shall support and encourage trends in agricultural production that shift suitable land into higher-value specialty crops that can support a more diverse processing sector with higher paying and more steady employment opportunities.
- Policy ED-A.13 The County shall assist agricultural agencies and marketing cooperatives to research global and domestic markets for high-value crops.
- Policy ED-A.14 The County shall encourage and, where appropriate, assist the Economic Development Corporation to develop new markets for Fresno County farm produce.
- Policy ED-A.15 The County shall support efforts of the UC Cooperative Extension, the Agricultural Commissioner, and other entities to provide technical assistance to farmers attempting to shift to higher-value crops.

- Policy ED-A.16 The County shall implement General Plan land use policies and programs to conserve agricultural land and to promote improved soil productivity. (See Section LU-A, Agriculture)
- Policy ED-A.17 The County shall ensure that regional workforce training programs funded by the Workforce Development Board include modules that address specialized crop care practices needed to implement a continuing shift to higher-value crops.
- Policy ED-A.18 The County shall determine if capital deficiencies exist for farmers with the capital costs of shifting production modes to crops that create higher employment levels. If such deficiencies are identified, the County shall assist agencies to access additional funds or redirect existing funds to meet this need.
- Policy ED-A.19 The County shall actively develop, adopt, and implement measures to ensure an adequate water supply for municipal and industrial use and agricultural production. The County shall explore and implement where feasible innovative new arrangements for providing additional water. (See Section PF-C, Water Supply and Delivery)

High-Value-Added Agriculture

- Policy ED-A.20 The County shall support accelerated development of high-value-added food processing firms.
- Policy ED-A.21 The County shall collaborate with research institutions and responsible agencies to research global and domestic markets for processed foods capable of production in Fresno County.
- Policy ED-A.22 Through its funding contracts related to the CalWORKS program, the County shall contract with the Fresno EDC to market Fresno County as a premier location for the production of globally-distributed food and fiber products.
- Policy ED-A.23 The County shall encourage processing facilities that obtain raw products regionally rather than just locally, including those which may logically be expected to expand into regional processing facilities, to locate in industrial parks under city jurisdiction or within existing unincorporated communities.
- Policy ED-A.24 Recognizing that certain critical requirements of food processing industries, such as wastewater treatment, may require innovative, regional solutions, the County shall support and encourage technology development programs through collaboration with research institutions, such as the California Agriculture Technology Institute at CSU Fresno, and other responsible agencies, for use by industries and cities to support the expansion of agricultural industries.
- Policy ED-A.25 The County shall work to improve regional transportation systems to support increased hauling of raw product into the county and export of finished goods nationally and globally. (See Transportation and Circulation Element)

Implementation Programs

Program ED-A.A The County shall create an economic development staff position(s) in the County Administrative Office and the Planning & Resource Management Department to serve as liaison/facilitator and support for the economic development implementation program and the Action Team. (See Policy ED-A.2, ED-A.3)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 00-01

Program ED-A.B The County shall create, support, and staff an Action Team to coordinate countywide economic development. (See Policy ED-A.3)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Time Frame: FY 00-01

Program ED-A.C The County shall retain an independent and qualified institution to conduct an evaluation at least every five (5) years of success in achieving the goals and targets of the Economic Development Strategy. (See Policy ED-A.4)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Time Frame: FY 05-06; every five (5) years thereafter

Program ED-A.D The County, working in cooperation with the cities, shall develop criteria for the location in the unincorporated areas of value-added agricultural processing facilities that are compatible with an agricultural setting. Such criteria shall take into account the service requirements of facilities for processing agricultural products and the capability and capacity of the cities to provide the services required. (See Policy ED-A.7)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02; 02-03; 03-04

Program ED-A.E The County shall establish guidelines for the analysis of the economic impacts in staff reports of all discretionary decisions by the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and other County decision-making bodies. (See Policy ED-A.11)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Time Frame: FY 00-01

Program ED-A.F The County shall contract with the Fresno EDC to develop marketing programs for Fresno County produce. (See Policy ED-A.14)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: Ongoing

Program ED-A.G The County shall determine, in cooperation with existing agencies, if capital deficiencies exist for farmers with the capital costs of shifting production modes to crops that create higher employment levels. If such deficiencies are identified, the County, in partnership with existing agencies, shall work to access additional funds or redirect existing funds. (See Policy ED-A.18)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
Department of Agriculture
Time Frame: FY 02-03; 03-04

B. ECONOMIC BASE DIVERSIFICATION

In order to improve economic stability, accelerate the pace of job growth, and maintain the quality of life for residents in the county, it is important to diversify the job base in the county. Opportunities for diversification exist both in old and in new industrial sectors. Industries such as metal fabrication and machinery that have emerged from the county's historical agricultural economy are now heavily engaged in production of a wide range of components for the consumer economy. Newer business opportunities in areas such as information technology have also gained a foothold in the county and should be nurtured and expanded into cornerstones of the future regional economy.

Every year, Fresno County hosts millions of visitors, more than half of which come to recreate. As the county's economy diversifies, demand for business travel will increase, with the need to develop more and better accommodations, amenities, and services. Similarly, the county's location as a gateway to Yosemite and the other Sierra attractions creates the opportunity for recreational and resort development in the foothills that can have a very beneficial impact on the local economy.

Policies in this section address information technology, non-agricultural industry, and recreation and tourism. Related policies are included in Section TR-E, Rail Transportation; Section TR-F, Air Transportation; Section OS-H, Parks and Recreation; Section OS-J, Historical, Cultural, and Geological Resources; Section OS-K, Scenic Resources; Section OS-L, Scenic Roadways; and Section PF-J, Utilities.

Goal ED-B To diversify the economic base of Fresno County through the expansion of non-agricultural industry clusters and through the development and expansion of recreation and visitor-serving attractions and accommodations.

Policies

Information Technology and Non-Agricultural Industry

- Policy ED-B.1 The County shall encourage the expansion of non-agricultural industry clusters such as information technology and fabricated metal components manufacturing.
- Policy ED-B.2 The County shall ensure, through its CalWORKS contracts, that the Fresno EDC actively markets the county to non-agricultural firms.
- Policy ED-B.3 The County shall ensure that training provided through the Workforce Development Board includes skills needed for information technology and non-agricultural manufacturing firms.
- Policy ED-B.4 The County shall provide leadership in the development of countywide telecommunications infrastructure.
- Policy ED-B.5 The County shall support the development of a statewide high speed rail service through the Central Valley. (See Policy TR-E.6)
- Policy ED-B.6 The County shall collaborate with Fresno Yosemite Airport to improve the level of air passenger service to Fresno County.
- Policy ED-B.7 The County shall help facilitate, where possible, the collaboration between institutions of higher learning and local and regional technology firms.
- Policy ED-B.8 The County shall support efforts to enhance the cultural and recreational amenities available in the county in order to maintain the desired livability for its residents as well as to attract business entrepreneurs from other metropolitan areas in California and throughout the nation and the world.
- Policy ED-B.9 The County shall actively support the efforts of new and existing businesses to access and maintain the highest levels of technology available for their operations.
- Policy ED-B.10 The County shall cooperate with major financial institutions, venture capital firms, and business finance agencies, such as the California Public Employees Retirement System (CALPERS), to help ensure the availability of capital for non-agricultural businesses.

Recreation and Tourism

- Policy ED-B.11 The County shall encourage the development of visitor-serving attractions and accommodations in unincorporated areas where natural amenities and resources are attractive and would not be diminished by tourist activities.

- Policy ED-B.12 The County shall actively promote the development of the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers for recreational use and as tourist destination.
- Policy ED-B.13 The County shall promote the development of the Friant-Millerton area as a major recreational corridor that includes camping, water sports, hiking, golf, conference/hotel facilities, and historic attractions. Facilities should include moderately-priced multifamily employee housing. (See Policy LU-H.8, Friant-Millerton Regional Plan)
- Policy ED-B.14 The County shall encourage additional recreational and visitor-serving development in the Sierra and foothills areas such as Shaver Lake and Pine Flat.
- Policy ED-B.15 The County shall support the enhancement of the county's recreational bikeways and promote the bikeway network as an important component of the county's tourism program. (See Policy TR-D.1)
- Policy ED-B.16 The County shall encourage coordination in advertising by the Visitor and Convention Bureau and by visitor-serving businesses.
- Policy ED-B.17 The County shall coordinate with regional transportation initiatives such as the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation Strategy (YARTS) that encourage strong connections with lodging centers in the foothills and mountain areas.
- Policy ED-B.18 The County shall initiate a planning process to identify additional recreation opportunities in the coast range foothills and other areas where "gateway opportunities" exist.
- Policy ED-B.19 The County shall encourage tourism and related job creation through implementation of the open space and recreation goals, policies, and programs of the General Plan.
- Policy ED-B.20 The County shall regularly evaluate the marketing programs of the Visitor and Convention Bureau and provide funding assistance as appropriate to support effective marketing programs that attract business travel to the county.
- Policy ED-B.21 The County shall encourage heritage tourism by highlighting Fresno County's historical and cultural resources.

Implementation Programs

- Program ED-B.A The County shall convene a group of the existing service providers to assess the current state of telecommunications infrastructure, the needs for the future, and the role of the County and other agencies in facilitating implementation of services demanded by high technology firms. (See Policy ED-B.4)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer

Time Frame: FY 02-03; 03-04

Program ED-B.B The County shall coordinate an initiative to deliver a comprehensive package of technical assistance regarding available technology to local businesses to improve their productivity and make this assistance available as an incentive for business prospects. (See Policy ED-B.9)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03; 03-04

Program ED-B.C The County shall convene a roundtable of major financial institutions, venture capital firms, and business finance agencies, such as the California Public Employees Retirement System (CALPERS), to determine the need for improving access to capital for non-agricultural businesses seeking to locate or expand in Fresno County. (See Policy ED-B.10)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 02-03

Program ED-B.D The County shall initiate a planning process to identify additional recreation opportunities in the coast range foothills and other areas where “gateway opportunities” exist. (See Policy ED-B.18)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 01-02

Program ED-B.E The County shall regularly evaluate the marketing programs of the Visitor and Convention Bureau and provide funding assistance as appropriate to support effective marketing programs that attract business travel to the county. (See Policy ED-B.20)

Responsibility: Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Officer
Planning & Resource Management Department
Time Frame: FY 00-01

C. LABOR FORCE PREPAREDNESS

The new jobs created over the next 20 years through implementation of the Economic Development Strategy will not benefit the current and future labor force of the county if its members are not qualified to secure and retain the jobs created. Training and education must be expanded to build a base of skills that would be attractive to firms locating in the area or seeking to expand. A quality work force is a top-ranking requirement for selecting a site according to site location professionals. Employers will be increasingly interested in employees that can be trained to a higher skill level. Therefore, the efforts to meet this need must address employment opportunities across all ages and skill levels.

Policies in this section seek to improve labor force preparedness for the local work force. Related policies are included in Section ED-A, Job Creation; Section LU-B, Economic Base Diversification; and Section PF-I, School and Library Facilities.

Goal ED-C To improve labor force preparedness by providing the local workforce with the skills needed to meet the requirements of an increasingly diverse business sector in the 21st century global economy.

Policies

Policy ED-C.1 The County shall, through its own programs and through cooperative efforts with other agencies and organizations, support efforts to improve the skills of the county's workforce needed to meet the requirements of Fresno County's new and expanding businesses.

Policy ED-C.2 The County shall encourage efforts to prepare students for the 21st century global economy. For example, the school districts in the county should be encouraged to adopt the School-to-Work program as a model for K-12 education and focus on the requirements of those clusters and industries targeted for future growth.

Policy ED-C.3 The County shall assist the community college districts in working with clusters and industries targeted for employment growth to develop and provide specialized training for their employees based on their specifications.

Policy ED-C.4 The County shall encourage and support the JOBS 2000 program to prepare the hard-to-serve unemployed for job readiness.

Implementation Programs

Program ED-C.A The County shall join with the Workforce Development Board, community colleges, and others to develop a countywide workforce preparation system. (See Policy ED-C.1)

Responsibility: Workforce Development Board
Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: Ongoing

Program ED-C.B The County shall develop a skills inventory on the CalWORKS labor pool for local expansion and new businesses seeking employees. (See Policy ED-C.1)

Responsibility: Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: FY 01-02

Program ED-C.C The County shall improve tracking systems for employment and retention for CalWORKS recipients. (See Policy ED-C.1)

Responsibility: Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: FY 00-01

Program ED-C.D The County shall continue efforts to assist the Fresno EDC, placement agencies, and businesses assess the availability and work readiness of CalWORKS recipients for employment opportunities. (See Policy ED-C.1)

Responsibility: Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: Ongoing

Program ED-C.E The County shall continue its collaborative planning and funding efforts with agencies such as the County Office of Education, State EDD, local school districts, post secondary educational institutions, training agencies, and the cities. Such efforts may include education management services, employment placement services, relocation and retention programs, youth employment programs, jobs clubs, and neighborhood jobs services. (See Policy ED-C.1 and ED-C.2)

Responsibility: Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: Ongoing

Program ED-C.F The County shall continue, on an ongoing basis, efforts initiated through the CalWORKS Job Creation Investment Fund to identify the skills required by the clusters and industries targeted for expansion, attraction, and new enterprise development. (See Policy ED-C.3)

Responsibility: Department of Employment & Temporary Assistance
Time Frame: Ongoing

