

The study's policy recommendations:

Support coordinated job training and human capital investment.

There should be a two pronged approach to job creation that simultaneously addresses the employment needs of the less skilled and the more highly educated and skilled.

Given the lack of job diversity documented in this report, there is a need for Merced County to broaden its economic base.

Continue efforts to improve the business climate in Merced County.

Creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurial activity should be a priority.

Merced County officials should use the policy tools and resources at their disposal to promote a culture of learning and high expectations.

The racial and ethnic diversity of Merced County should be considered economic and community development assets.

Given age trends in Merced County, there is a need to invest in youth - Merced County's future workforce.

Merced County has a port, and it happens to be an airport located at the Castle Airport Aviation and Development Center.

Since Merced County is considered the "Gateway to Yosemite," there should be a concerted effort to promote tourism.

Commuters on the west side of Merced County are a potential economic development asset.

Pursue a study of the transportation needs of TANF recipients.

Establish a visioning process that is both inclusive and focused.

A "centering strategy" will reap economic development benefits and facilitate County efforts to overcome the fragmentation that invariably hinders the pursuit of the shared interests of residents, regardless of where they live or the nature of their group identities.

With the development of the UC Merced campus, infrastructure will be a key issue on the policy agenda.

The principal problems identified in the study:

High Degree of Ethnic Diversity
Lack of Consensus/ Shared Interest among residents
Extremely Young Population
Extremely High Youth Dependency Ratio
High Concentration of At-Risk Residents
Talent Drain
Low Educational Attainment
Low Academic Performance
High Unemployment
Low Labor Force Participation
Low Skilled Workforce
Poor Work Readiness Values/Attitudes
Low Job Growth
Flat/ Declining Real Wages
Low Gross County Product
Low Diversity of Employers/Occupations/Industries
High Poverty Rates
High Level of Transfer Payments
High Degree of Seasonality in Employment

Suggested approach:

1. Review the study and its findings.
2. Agree on the core problems - the "big things" we are ultimately trying to fix or get right. The Center for Public Policy identified human capital, economic diversity, leadership and fragmentation of efforts as examples.
3. Distinguish between primary problems and symptoms. Make a list of each.
4. Pick the things we want to work on - the objects of our collective attention. Distinguish between those problems we can do something about and those we have no control over. Make a list.
5. Order the problems we are going to work on. Some are more important -have more of an impact on the "core problem" - than others.
6. Apply that ordered list to a matrix.