

2026-2030 RIVERSIDE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN



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Riverside County:

California's Economic Future

Riverside County is emerging as a top-tier destination for business and innovation. With a population of 2.5 million¹ and a strategic location at the heart of the Western United States' major economic corridors, Riverside County is poised to become a national leader in innovation, job creation, industry expansion, and business investment.

This Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) lays out a bold vision and related implementation framework for maximizing quality economic growth in Riverside County. The recommended Action Plan reflects Riverside County's substantial development capacity and impressive industry growth opportunities, while also recognizing a range of foundational challenges that will need to be addressed in order for Riverside County to fully realize its strategic potential. Implementation of the EDSP is expected to be spearheaded by the Riverside County Office of Economic Development (RivCoED) in collaboration with a wide array of public and private partners identified in the Plan. In this regard, the EDSP is designed to align with and enhance ongoing economic development efforts across the Inland Empire and the broader State of California, while focusing on strategic priorities uniquely relevant to Riverside County.

Sizing Up Riverside County's Economic Development Potential and Challenges

Historic and projected development patterns within the Southern California (SoCal) megaregion indicate a promising economic future for Riverside County but also underscore some of the county's fundamental challenges. For decades Riverside County's abundant supply of developable land, relatively affordable housing, and excellent quality of life attributes have fueled strong population growth, in

The Riverside County Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) is both an actionable blueprint for catalyzing inclusive regional growth and a compliant framework that aligns with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (USEDA) Guidelines for a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Recognizing the dynamic needs of our region, the EDSP is crafted as a flexible and integrative tool that satisfies federal regulatory requirements while also advancing locally driven priorities.

The USED A encourages the use of alternative or equivalent plans, so long as the content and process are consistent with USED A regulations (13 C.F.R §303.7). The Riverside County EDSP meets and exceeds these expectations—not only by incorporating the required statutory elements, but also by reflecting meaningful engagement with community leaders, stakeholders, and underrepresented voices throughout the County.

In alignment with USED A guidance (see Appendix A) the Riverside County EDSP is not a standalone document, but a convergence point for broader regional, state, and local plans. It operationalizes the USED A's vision of integrated development by building bridges between economic goals and complementary planning efforts in housing, transportation, economic resilience, broadband infrastructure, and more.



large part driven by migration from SoCal's more expensive and congested coastal counties.

In addition to leading Southern California in population and housing growth, Riverside County has also experienced impressive growth in local employment opportunities. However, job gains have generally lagged population increases and have largely been concentrated in local-serving industries (which typically generate lower-paying jobs than “traded” or export-oriented industries). Other than local-serving industries, logistics has emerged as Riverside County's most prominent traded industry cluster in recent years, playing a vital role in strengthening the Inland Empire's economic base, particularly in the post-Great Recession recovery. However, the momentum of this sector has slowed in the aftermath of the pandemic, as shifting global supply chains and regional saturation have tempered further expansion. As the region looks ahead, there is growing momentum to build on this success by expanding into other traded sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, clean technology, and professional services, that offer broader career pathways and long-term economic resilience. With increasing awareness of the environmental and infrastructure challenges associated with large-scale logistics development, communities across Riverside County are embracing a more balanced and forward-thinking approach.

The above-described dynamics have resulted in an economy that, while very strong by traditional measures (population/housing growth and gross numbers of jobs), has not fully met the economic needs of Riverside County's workforce. As such, many Riverside County residents must commute to jobs outside the county. Indeed, Riverside County's resident workforce has the largest proportion of out-commuters (and the longest commute times) among all counties in Southern California. Improving this longstanding condition, by increasing both the quantity and quality of Riverside County based job opportunities, is a fundamental objective of the EDSP.

Notwithstanding these underlying challenges, Riverside County's unique institutional assets (most notably, industry-supporting research and business development functions at UC Riverside) provide a tremendous springboard for promoting innovation, supporting expansion and attraction of high-paying industries, and nurturing technology-oriented entrepreneurial investments.

Reflecting this combination of very favorable conditions with notable concerns, the EDSP focuses on strategic actions that can harness the county's economic momentum, leverage a partnership approach to economic development, and maximize the growth potentials of legacy and emerging industries to continue to improve both the quantity and quality of employment opportunities accessible to Riverside County's resident workforce.

Connection to Regional and State Initiatives. Significantly, the EDSP is being launched at a time when the State is rolling out a groundbreaking initiative (California Jobs First, or CJF), to transform California's economic future. The strategic vision for CJF is articulated in the State Economic Blueprint released in February 2025.

The three-year planning effort for CJF embraced a bottom-up approach whereby opportunities and needs were comprehensively evaluated within each of California's 13 economic regions, allowing for the development (separate from the statewide Blueprint) of region-specific aspirational targets (industry clusters) and implementation structures. As noted in the Blueprint, this process forged new coalitions in each of the 13 regions that "brought together voices from business, labor, community, education, local government, and more to collectively design the economic future they envision for their respective communities."

CJF's "Inland SoCal" region encompasses Riverside and San Bernardino counties, reflecting the commonalities and shared economic assets of the Inland Empire's two counties. The implementation framework for Inland SoCal is provided in the Thrive Inland SoCal California Jobs First (CJF) Regional Plan (also released in early 2025).

Riverside County's Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) is designed to align with and amplify CJF initiatives, serving as a catalyst for deeper regional collaboration while affirming RivCoED's commitment to addressing Riverside County-specific priorities. The EDSP selectively integrates best practices, research insights, and the overarching vision articulated in CJF planning documents, ensuring coherence with broader regional goals. At the same time, the EDSP positions Riverside County to capitalize on state and regional investments in high-growth industry sectors, particularly those that represent the county's strongest opportunities for sustainable job creation and inclusive economic advancement.

What Sets Riverside County Apart

- **Strategic Location within Dynamic Southern California Megaregion:** Situated at the crossroads of Southern California's major transportation corridors, Riverside County offers unmatched proximity to the Western U.S. market. With direct access to interstate highways, freight rail, and international airports, businesses can reach over 30 million consumers within a day's drive, making it an ideal launch point for regional, national, and global operations.²
- **Available Land and Lower Business Costs:** Compared to coastal metros, Riverside County offers more affordable commercial and industrial real estate, with average lease rates 25-30% lower than in San Diego, Orange, and Los Angeles counties.³ Combined with a strong inventory of development-ready sites, this cost advantage makes Riverside County a smart choice for businesses seeking expansion.
- **Housing Options and Affordability:** Riverside County also enjoys a significant advantage in terms of housing affordability. The diverse housing stock provides a wide range of ownership and rental options, at prices 30-55% lower and rents 20-30% lower than SoCal's coastal counties. These marked differences in affordability are important both from the perspective of resident quality of life and from the standpoint of attracting and retaining the workforce needed to support the growth of targeted industry clusters.

What is a quality job?

The Inland SoCal CJF Plan uses a method called Opportunity Industries analysis, which was developed by the Brookings Institution to identify industries likely to create large numbers of quality jobs.

According to the Opportunity Industries definition, a quality job must:

Pay enough over the course of a year to cover a family's basic needs and leave some extra money left over for emergencies and savings

Include health insurance (which tends to mean that the job offers other benefits as well)

Provide a level of financial stability over the next ten years (either by continuing to be a quality job or by providing a path to a different quality job).

The Opportunity Industries analysis also considers "promising jobs — positions that don't meet all three of these criteria but can still help a worker move into a quality job within a decade."

Attention to promising jobs reflects the fact that many entry-level positions do not meet the definition of a quality job but can play an important role in helping workers gain the skills and experience they need to advance in their careers. Quality jobs and promising jobs together are referred to as "opportunity jobs."

Growing Workforce: Riverside County is characterized by a young, diverse labor pool, with 35% of the population under age 25⁴, supported by UC Riverside, a top-tier research university known for advancing economic mobility and labor education, CSU San Bernardino, CSU San Marcos (Temecula), California Baptist University, Loma Linda University, University of Redlands, La Sierra University, Chapman University, UMass Global, and a robust community college network.

The CJF analysis underscores the need for continued improvements to Inland SoCal's educational and workforce development capacities. Overall, the region's educational attainment is comparatively low, lagging both state and national high school diploma and bachelor's degree rates by nearly 10 percent. The region has been addressing this fundamental challenge through a range of interventions for more than a decade, with some progress, yet this differential is still recognized as a major factor constraining Inland SoCal's economic competitiveness and mobility.

On average, Inland SoCal workers have 82.9 percent of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that quality jobs in the region require (see sidebar for discussion on quality/promising jobs). The amount of overlap between the knowledge, skills, and abilities that workers have and what quality jobs require is different depending on how much education a worker has. Workers with a four-year college degree have the highest amount of overlap (91.5 percent). This indicates that they possess nearly all the skills and qualifications that employers seek in high-quality jobs. But even those workers with only a high school diploma or G.E.D. have a high degree of overlap (88.1 percent). These findings suggest that focused training programs with wraparound supports that address key barriers to participation (e.g., childcare, transportation, affordability concerns) could help more Inland SoCal workers, including those with lower levels of formal education, secure a quality job⁵.

- **Business-Friendly Environment:** Riverside County is generally recognized by the business/development community as a business-friendly alternative to Southern California’s more costly and land-constrained coastal counties. This positive image (which was confirmed by stakeholders participating in the EDSP process) stems from both market realities (less expensive real estate) and broader community/political support for quality growth. From a municipal government standpoint, Riverside County and its incorporated cities offer streamlined permitting and targeted incentives to support business growth. The County Office of Economic Development proactively coordinates with 75 organizations to deliver workforce training and site selection assistance. However, perceptions about business friendliness in Riverside County vary from city to city, with each municipality following its own practices for development entitlement, permit processing, etc. A potential role of RivCoED (through the EDSP) is to provide technical guidance to its partner cities to ensure that Riverside County as a whole can present a unified front of business friendliness as part of Countywide economic development messaging.
- **Innovation:** As documented in the CJF planning effort, Riverside County stands out as the innovation core of Inland SoCal, with a concentrated set of high-impact assets that contribute to regional economic growth. Home to 20 higher education institutions, leading environmental science research facilities, and the state headquarters for air quality programs, the region has underlying strengths in innovations related to climate or clean tech action – in energy systems, emissions, and materials. Research activities take place primarily at UCR, which also fills critical institutional capacity roles in regional economic development. Adjacent to the UC Riverside campus stands the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Southern California Headquarters, one of the world’s most advanced facilities for vehicle and mobile-source emissions testing. Strengthening connections and capabilities among these and other assets can help the region make the most of its innovation ecosystem.



Priority Industry Clusters

Based on a rigorous analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement process, the EDSP identifies eight priority industry clusters positioned to drive Riverside County's future growth:

1

Advanced Manufacturing

Aerospace, defense, semiconductors, medical devices, and mobility tech.

2

AgTech

Precision agriculture, irrigation tech, and food systems.

3

Biotech

Pharma/biotech, medtech, healthtech, and other life sciences

4

Clean Energy

Solar, battery storage, and microgrid innovation.

5

Creative Media & Digital Production

Film, music, and digital content production.

6

Cybersecurity

Cloud security, operational technology protection, and digital forensics safeguarding critical systems and data.

7

Hospitality & Tourism

Outdoor recreation, cultural venues, and destination development.

8

Transportation and Logistics

Supply chain technologies, automation, and innovation enhancing competitiveness across established logistics infrastructure



The Opportunity Ahead

Riverside County⁶ has laid a strong foundation for growth, creating over 194,000 new private-sector jobs in the past decade and seeing a 64% surge in new business formation since 2014⁷. Looking forward, the region is poised to unlock more than \$200 million in potential federal and state funding for infrastructure, workforce development, and innovation⁸. The Economic Development Strategic Plan outlines a clear vision for growth and economic prosperity that is anchored in an existing business ecosystem with key pillars for the future:

It prioritizes **industry diversification and growth**, modernizing legacy sectors where Riverside County has a competitive edge while strategically expanding into high-growth industries, harnessing the clusters as engines of innovation and quality job creation.

The EDSP emphasizes **workforce development** that taps into a young, diverse population and strong educational institutions that are fueling a skilled talent pipeline, with expanded training and apprenticeship programs tailored to industry needs.

Riverside County will cultivate a **dynamic business environment** by supporting startups, expanding access to capital, and fostering innovation through collaborative networks, engaging with existing businesses and streamlining support for new investment, enhancing the prevailing business-friendly environment.

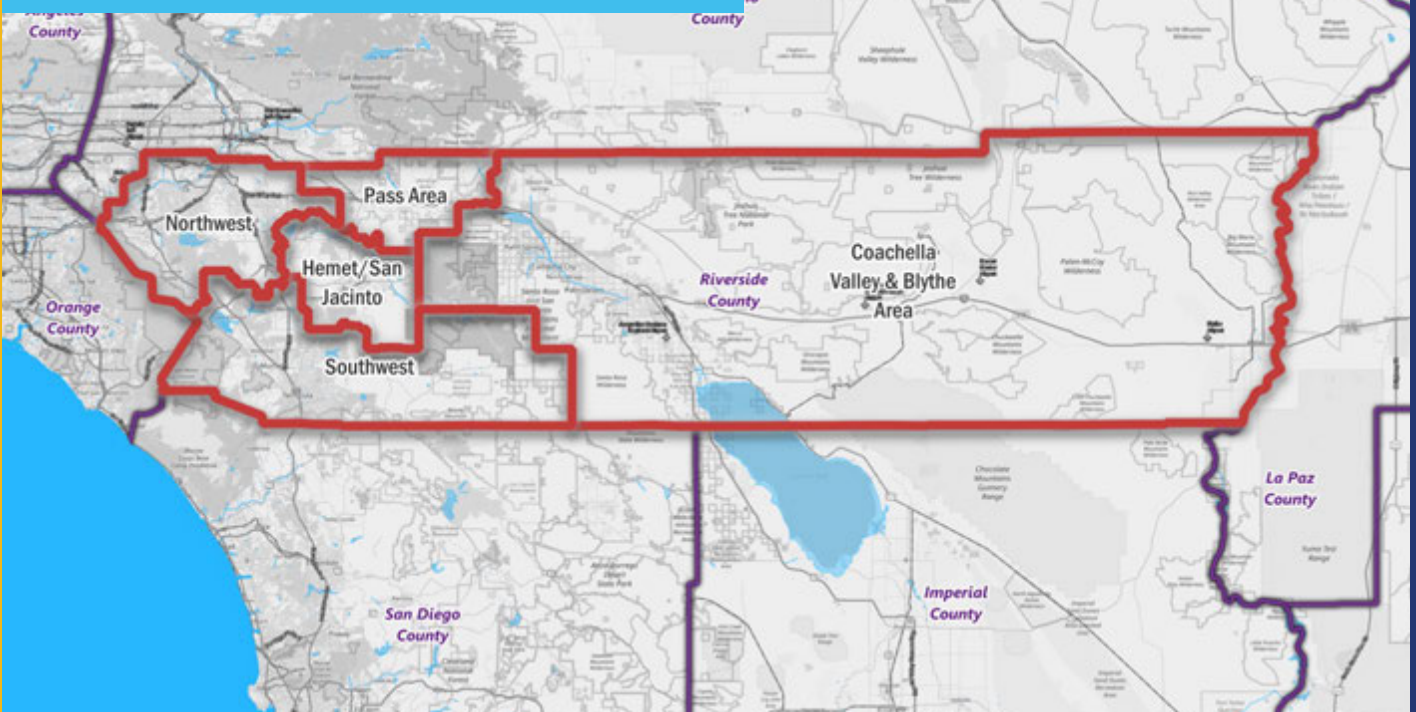
The EDSP encourages **infrastructure and site readiness**, promoting strategic investments in transportation, digital connectivity, and land-use modernization, laying the groundwork for long-term economic growth and regional mobility, with a focus on revitalizing underutilized properties and supporting activities that ensure key sites are development-ready.

The Plan encourages strengthening cross-jurisdictional partnerships and positioning the County as a strategic hub for trade, investment, and integrated regional development. The EDSP promotes efforts to elevate the region's identity by promoting Riverside County as a destination for culture, recreation, and business, enhancing visibility and economic impact.

Focusing on livability, the Plan encourages investments in housing, healthcare, public amenities, and placemaking to create vibrant, healthy communities.

// Mapping the Future: Subregional Insights Driving Countywide Impact

FIGURE 1. RIVERSIDE COUNTY'S SUBREGIONS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Riverside County, TNDG.

The EDSP is organized around Riverside County's five distinct subregions: Northwest, Southwest, Pass Area, Hemet/San Jacinto, and Coachella Valley/Blythe. This structure reflects the County's geographic and economic diversity, allowing strategies to be tailored to the unique assets, challenges, and opportunities within each area. Maps of the County and its subregions are included in Appendix B, highlighting cities, unincorporated Census Designated Places (CDPs), and Tribal lands.



// Economic Summary

▶ Economic Base Analysis

This section provides highlights of existing and projected demographic characteristics that influence the economic development potential of Riverside County and its subregions. This summary has been extracted from a more detailed report prepared for the EDSP process (Analysis of Key Datasets for Economic Development Strategic Plan, Appendix E).

Key Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Labor Force Efficiency and Commuting Patterns

Patterns in labor force efficiency and commuting behavior point to strategic opportunities for strengthening business development and improving livability across the region. The variation in commute times across subregions presents a strategic opportunity to align business growth with workforce accessibility, particularly in areas with shorter commutes that can support local employment hubs.

- 46.5% of Riverside County residents work within the County, while 53.5% commute out, creating a significant resource for local job creation.
- Subregional gaps are evident:
 - Pass Area: 16.6% of residents work locally, with the remainder commuting within the region or beyond.
 - Coachella Valley and Blythe: Highest local employment at 59.7%.
- Commute times above average:
 - County average: 33.8 minutes, above state (28.98 minutes) and national (26.57 minutes) benchmarks.
 - Southwest Subregion: Highest commute at 38.3 minutes.
 - Coachella Valley and Blythe: Lowest at 22.5 minutes.

Industry Sector Employment

Riverside County benefits from a robust foundation in essential services and trade-related industries, with logistics and warehousing standing out as strategic assets. Meanwhile, professional services and manufacturing are well-positioned for expansion, offering potential to attract investment and elevate the region's economic profile.

- Educational Services, Healthcare and Social Assistance dominate employment at 21.1%, with Pass Area (26.6%) and Southwest (22.9%) leading.
- Construction (9.3%) and Retail Trade (12.1%) are also major employers.
- Transportation and Logistics (7.7%) is a standout sector, especially in logistics-heavy subregions.
- Professional Services (10.5%) and Manufacturing (8.1%) show potential for expansion.

Housing

High rates of homeownership signal a stable and invested population, which is a key asset for long-term economic development. Low vacancy rates across most subregions reflect strong housing demand, while seasonal patterns in Coachella Valley and Blythe offer unique opportunities for tourism and second-home markets. Tackling affordability challenges will be essential to sustaining livability and workforce retention.

- Owner-occupied housing is high at 68.9%, the strongest among peer counties.
- Vacancy rates are low across most subregions, except Coachella Valley and Blythe (26.9%), due to seasonal housing.
- Housing cost burden (50%+ of income) remains elevated:
 - Countywide : 14.06% of households
 - Hemet/San Jacinto saw an increase from 14.95% to 15.98% (2019–2023).

Education and Workforce Readiness

Riverside County's growing base of college-educated residents, especially in the Southwest Subregion, provides a strong foundation for workforce development. Expanding STEM education and improving rural access to advanced training facilities will help unlock the region's full innovation potential and support high-growth industries.

- Bachelor's degree or higher: 25.1% Countywide
 - Southwest Subregion leads at 29.6%
 - Hemet/San Jacinto lags at 14.7%
- STEM degrees are underrepresented:
 - Only 34.4% of bachelor's holders have Science & Engineering majors—lowest among peer counties.
- Workforce development gaps:
 - Limited access to advanced labs and training in rural areas.
 - Weak articulation between high school pathways and college-level programs.

Age and Demographics

Riverside County's age diversity, from a young and growing population in the Northwest to a mature community in Coachella Valley and Blythe, offers a unique opportunity to design multi-generational strategies that enhance livability, support workforce development and meet the evolving needs of residents across all stages of life.

- Median age: 36.7 years, younger than most peer counties.
- Coachella Valley & Blythe: Highest share of residents aged 65+ (24.2%) and highest median age (44.2).
- Northwest Subregion: Youngest population, with 36.1% under age 25.

Population and Employment Growth Forecasts (2020–2035)

Riverside County is projected to lead Southern California in population and employment growth through 2035, outpacing neighboring counties and reinforcing its role as a regional economic engine. Subregional trends highlight strong momentum in the Southwest and Northwest, driven by housing, amenities, and transportation access. Moderate growth in the Pass Area and revitalization potential in Hemet/San Jacinto offer room for strategic investment, while Coachella Valley and Blythe benefit from sector-specific drivers like tourism, agriculture, and clean energy.

Countywide Trends

- Riverside County is projected to experience robust growth in both population and employment over the 15-year projection period.
- This growth is expected to outpace neighboring counties like Imperial and San Bernardino, positioning Riverside County as a key driver of Southern California's economic expansion over the next 15+ years.

Subregional Population Growth Highlights

- **Southwest Subregion:** Highest projected population growth, driven by housing development and quality-of-life amenities.
- **Northwest Subregion:** Strong growth due to proximity to major transportation corridors and urban centers.
- **Pass Area:** Moderate growth, with potential for expansion tied to infrastructure upgrades.
- **Hemet/San Jacinto:** Slower population growth, but opportunities exist through targeted revitalization and housing affordability.
- **Coachella Valley and Blythe:** Growth influenced by tourism, agriculture, and clean energy investments.

Riverside County's Target Industries:

Building the Next Generation Economy

Riverside County is not just growing—it's strategically positioning itself to lead in high-impact, innovation-driven sectors. The EDSP identifies eight priority industry clusters that offer the greatest potential for creation of quality/promising jobs, investment attraction, and long-term economic transformation.

This table summarizes the eight priority industry clusters identified in the Riverside County Target Industry Analysis (Appendix G). Each cluster is aligned with strategic goals for job creation, innovation, and regional competitiveness.

Industry Cluster	Strategic Focus	Subregional Relevance	Economic Potential
Advanced Manufacturing	Aerospace, semiconductors, medical devices, mobility tech, plastics, and energy use	Countywide (esp. NW, SW, Pass)	High-wage jobs, innovation, supplier networks, export-oriented growth
AgTech	Precision irrigation, sensors, aerial imaging, crop resiliency	Southwest, Coachella Valley & Blythe	Modernizing agriculture, water efficiency, food systems innovation
Biotech		Northwest, Southwest	High-wage jobs, innovation, supplier networks (tied to advanced manufacturing), ties to UCR research
Clean Energy	Battery storage, microgrids, hydrogen, grid modernization	Northwest, Coachella Valley	Sustainability, infrastructure investment, ties to UCR research
Creative Media & Digital Production	Film, music, streaming, branded content, post-production	Coachella Valley & Blythe	Competitive with LA, high location quotients, mobile production labs

Industry Cluster	Strategic Focus	Subregional Relevance	Economic Potential
Cybersecurity	Cloud security, operational tech, digital forensics	Northwest	Cross-sector digital protection, NSA-designated programs, emerging talent pipelines
Hospitality & Tourism	Culinary, resorts, agri-tourism, outdoor recreation	Southwest, Coachella Valley	Quality-of-life driver, cultural asset, gateway to regional tourism
Transportation and Logistics	Advancing innovation in supply chain technologies, automation, and sustainable freight solutions	Countywide	Inland port potential, academies, automation training

Alignment of EDSP Target Industries with Regional/State Initiatives

Although derived through an independent research process, the EDSP’s target industry clusters significantly overlap with current State and regional investment priorities emerging from the California Jobs First (CJF) initiative. Relevant highlights of the CJF findings include:

- The **clean economy** agenda centers on regional capabilities in energy systems, emission controls / remediation (air and water), advanced materials, and mobility tech. It aims to boost climate resilience, increase energy independence, and accelerate the transition to a carbon-neutral future. It encompasses a wide range of industries, products, and services that extend into almost every aspect of daily life, including clean energy, power grid infrastructure, buildings, and transportation. This strategy for innovation and commercialization will be complemented by accelerating adoption of clean economy solutions in the region to adapt existing activities, strengthening local businesses and improving quality of life for Inland SoCal residents in the process.

- **Advanced manufacturing** potential in the region focuses more specifically on reinforcing and repositioning legacy strengths from aerospace and similar production, including complex commercial and industrial machinery, microelectronics, and components. In service-oriented sectors, both engineering and drafting are a natural part of this landscape and thus also included in the cluster.
- **Cybersecurity** is a refinement of opportunity within advanced business and professional services —protecting computer systems and networks against bad

The Outsized Role of Logistics in Inland SoCal (From CJF Document)

The Inland SoCal logistics sector is a substantial economic force in the region and a key node in the national and global goods movement network. State policies have promoted growing supply chain and logistics as both an economic engine and enabler of other industries in California.

Massive industry investment over the years has resulted in an expansive system of warehouses, distribution centers, and intermodal logistics infrastructure. The immense scale of the sector in SoCal is reflected in its workforce: 215,000 residents work in logistics. The quality of jobs in this sector – particularly in warehousing that comprises the vast majority of employment – often receives criticism because only about one-third of logistics jobs meet the standard of quality/promising jobs.

Although past efforts to move the sector up the value chain by making the region a “center of excellence” for innovation and commercialization of sustainable logistics products and services have not come to fruition, some elements of those plans still hold relevance.

Digitization and decarbonization are of particular potential given looming state climate targets. Improved coordination and collaboration with the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the Los Angeles area more broadly, alongside similar investments, will streamline and accelerate logistics-related climate action throughout the Southern California megaregion.

actors. An urgent demand from governments, businesses, and organizations of all sizes, the regional potential nearly a decade ago centered on a strength in simply training to fill unmet quality job openings. However, as capabilities and workforce production have expanded, along with acceptance of remote services, that possibility has extended to business and job creation. The technical and talent capacity in the region is converging with new relationships meeting needs of federal and defense agencies, emerging as a new base for economic growth in cybersecurity activities not already occupied by regions focused on basic research or a government operation. Inland SoCal has strong momentum in the cybersecurity sector. Over the past 15 years, the Center for Cyber and AI (CyAI) at California State University – San Bernardino (CSUSB) has positioned the region at the forefront of cybersecurity workforce development. During this time, the Center for CyAI received high-profile federal designations from the National Security Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and the National Science Foundation for excellence in cybersecurity education. Through these designations, the Center shapes standards and best practices in cybersecurity training nationwide.

The Future of Logistics in Riverside County: A Focus on Transition and Innovation

The inclusion of logistics as one of the EDSP's eight priority industry clusters warrants further explanation. While logistics has clearly been a major job creator in Riverside County over the past two decades, it has also increasingly been the subject of community concerns about job quality (see sidebar) and environmental impacts. Even from a market perspective, there are current indications that the industry is overbuilt, with a substantial uptick in vacancies of major warehouse buildings.

To be clear: the EDSP is not recommending that RivCoED expend resources to target attraction of new warehouse facilities. Instead, the EDSP recommends a focus on facilitating an eventual transition of the industry to include a higher concentration of innovation-oriented jobs related to transportation and goods movement, consistent with the growing technological capacities in other targeted industries.

The EDSP recommends that RivCoED also play a direct role in encouraging creative reuse of surplus warehouse buildings in a manner that enhances the region's capacity to attract and grow other targeted industries such as advanced manufacturing.





Competitive Analysis

A comprehensive understanding of Riverside County's economic position is essential for shaping effective development strategies. This Competitive Analysis provides a multidimensional assessment of the County's strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the broader regional and national landscape. It integrates a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, industry trend insights, and benchmarking against peer counties to identify Riverside County's competitive advantages and areas for improvement.

The analysis also examines key components of economic competitiveness, including workforce development capacity, business retention and expansion dynamics, recruitment strategies, and the effectiveness of business assistance services. Additionally, it evaluates site selection factors that influence investment decisions, offering a data-driven foundation for policy and program development. Together, these elements inform a forward-looking strategy to enhance Riverside County's economic resilience, innovation potential, and long-term prosperity.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)



Strengths

- Strong job creation focus and business-friendly environment
- Availability of land and real estate for expansion
- Intellectual assets and innovation hubs driving tech and biotech growth
- Significant infrastructure investments supporting business expansion
- Positioned along Southern Trade Corridor and Interstate 10 for logistics and manufacturing
- Well-developed logistics infrastructure (air, rail, highways)
- Reliable public utilities and lower energy costs enhancing competitiveness
- Growing workforce with a strong emphasis on training and development
- Presence of higher education institutions strengthening talent pipelines
- Affordable housing and living costs attract residents and businesses
- Healthcare facilities supporting retirees and economic opportunities
- Rich tourism and cultural assets, including ecotourism, entertainment venues, and festivals.
- Presence of Foreign Trade Zones



Weaknesses

- Limited water, power, and septic/sewer capacity to support growth in some areas
- Restricted access points and infrastructure controlled by Caltrans
- High infrastructure costs passed on to developers
- Difficulty retaining local talent and young professionals leaving for better opportunities
- Limited business incentives compared to other states
- Difficulty retaining small businesses due to lack of resources and support
- Seasonal economy posing challenges for industry diversification
- Burdensome state taxes and regulations impacting business attraction and retention
- High dependency on retail developments for infrastructure improvements
- Resistance to new developments within some communities
- Increasing traffic congestion and potential gridlock
- Limited public transportation options in some regions



Opportunities

- Growth in healthcare, manufacturing, renewable energy, aerospace, and clean technology
- Potential for foreign direct investment and onshoring
- Business attraction from higher-cost regions like LA/OC counties
- Retaining local talent and reducing economic leakage
- Expanding higher education infrastructure and trade schools
- Developing nursing programs and healthcare workforce training
- Targeting remote work and technology jobs

- Investments in broadband infrastructure for technology-driven industries
- Expansion of regional transportation and transit-oriented development
- Adaptive reuse of obsolete land-uses to maximize development potential
- Growth in sports tourism, youth sports venues, and equestrian facilities
- Expansion of outdoor recreation, including hiking, biking, and water-based tourism
- Collaboration for recreation-driven industries
- Strengthening partnerships with regional agencies and educational institutions
- Establishing a strong county identity focused on industrial innovation and skilled workforce
- Leveraging population growth to enhance economic vitality.
- State initiated CEQA reforms.



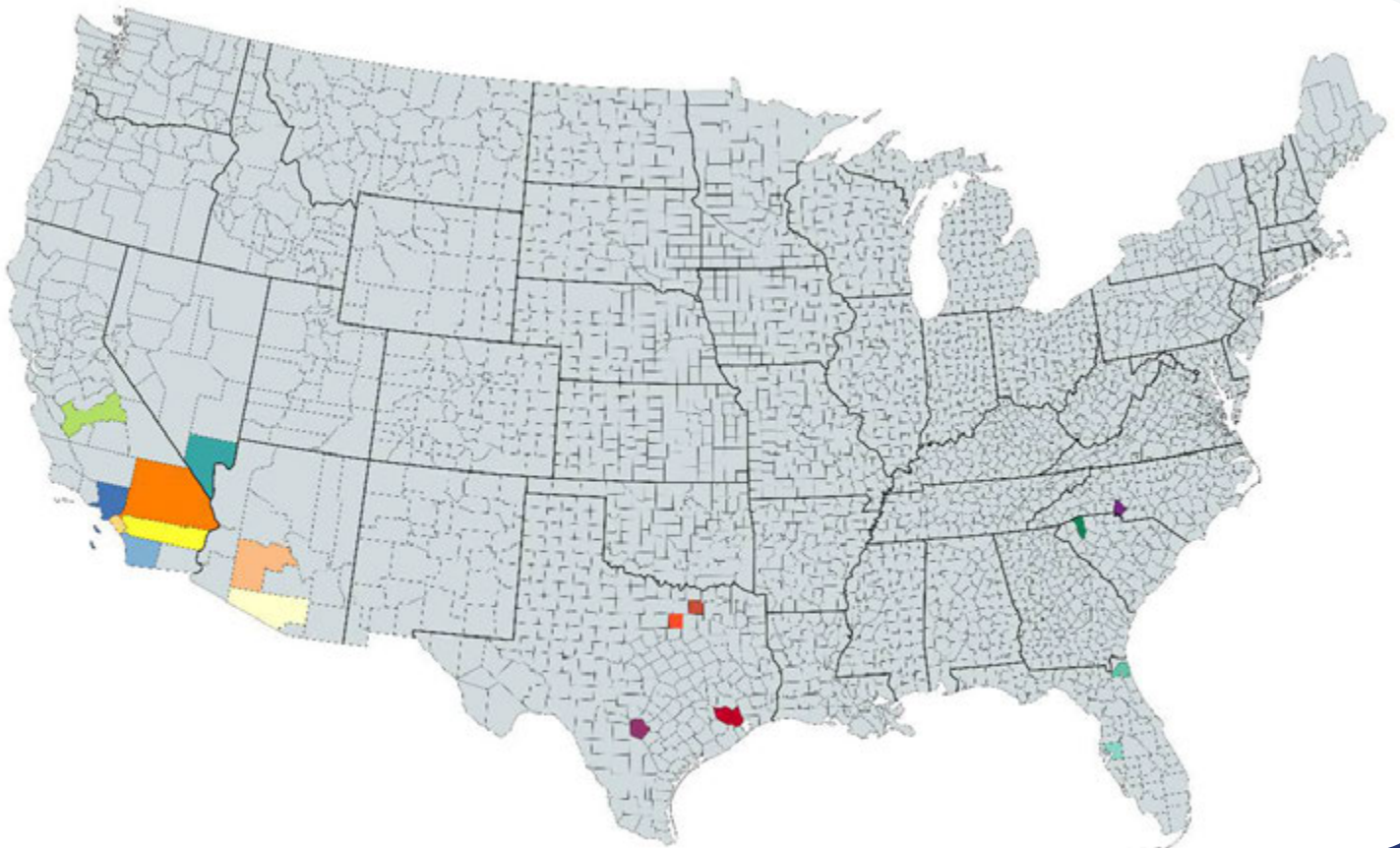
Threats


















- High development costs, fees, and entitlements delaying projects
- Difficulty securing funding for infrastructure improvements
- Increased shortages in healthcare professionals, engineers, and skilled workers
- Economic leakage as talent and businesses move to neighboring regions
- Limited business incentives compared to other states
- Complex regulatory environment, including CEQA and permitting delays
- High development costs due to state and local regulations
- Outdated zoning policies restricting business flexibility
- Competition from neighboring regions like Arizona and larger metropolitan areas
- Wildfire risks and increasing insurance costs
- Resistance to change and new development within communities



// Benchmark Comparison

The benchmarking assessment compares Riverside County's economic performance to 17 peer and aspirational counties nationwide, selected in collaboration with Office of Economic Development staff. The analysis provides data-driven insights into key indicators such as job growth, business formation, industry specialization, and workforce readiness. By focusing on sectors critical to Riverside County's future, the assessment helps shape a strategic, evidence-based Economic Development Strategic Plan that aligns with the county's long-term competitiveness and talent development goals. The full benchmark analysis is found in Appendix K.



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Riverside County, CA |  Bexar County, TX |  Clark County, NV |
|  Collin County, TX |  Duval County, FL |  Fresno County, CA |
|  Greenville County, SC |  Harris County, TX |  Hillsborough County, FL |
|  Los Angeles County, CA |  Maricopa County, AZ |  Mecklenburg County, NC |
|  Orange County, CA |  Pima County, AZ |  San Bernardino County, CA |
|  San Diego County, CA |  Tarrant County, TX | |

Key Economic Performance

Highlights for Riverside County (2014–2024)

Riverside County has demonstrated strong private-sector momentum and post-pandemic resilience, with notable gains in job creation and business formation. While employment density and labor force participation remain areas for improvement, the county's recovery and sustained growth position it as a rising economic force in the region.

- ✔ **Private Sector Job Growth:** +38.4% total growth, 3.31% CAGR, 194,984 new jobs.
- ✔ **New Business Formation** +64% increase in establishments, 5.1% annualized growth.
- ✔ **Employment Density** 275.2 jobs per 1,000 residents, lowest among peers.
- ✔ **Labor Force Participation** 60.6%, second lowest among benchmark counties.
- ✔ **Economic Resilience** After a 5.0% employment drop in 2020 (the steepest among the Benchmark Counties), Riverside County not only regained pre-pandemic job levels by 2022 but sustained above-average growth through 2024, demonstrating economic resilience.

Benchmark County Comparisons

Riverside County is positioned as a “fast follower”. As a fast follower, Riverside County is demonstrating a rapidly growing and evolving economy and strong potential for catching up or surpassing peers by adopting successful strategies, targeted investments and building on innovation. Compared to peers:

- ✔ **Top Performers** (e.g., Collin, Maricopa, Mecklenburg) combine high job growth with high employment density and educational attainment.
- ✔ **Mature Markets** (e.g., Los Angeles, Orange, Harris) show high density but slower growth.
- ✔ **Emerging Markets** (e.g., Fresno, San Bernardino) share Riverside County's growth trajectory but face similar infrastructure and workforce challenges.

Targeted Industry Performance (Riverside County)

Riverside County's clear strength in transportation and logistics provides an opportunity for utilizing local innovation to transform the future of this industry. Likewise, the opportunities in other industries provides opportunity for increased economic diversification. Full target industry analysis available in appendix G.

Strengths:

- Transportation & Logistics: 75,305 jobs; LQ 2.14.
- Hospitality & Tourism: 4,500+ establishments; LQ 1.18.

Opportunities:

- Advanced Manufacturing: Weak presence in aerospace, semiconductors, and medical devices relative to peer counties.
- AgTech: Low employment and establishment LQs in most components of this cluster.
- Biotech: Low employment and establishment LQs in most components of this cluster.
- Clean Energy: Low employment and establishment LQs.
- Cybersecurity & Media Production: Minimal presence; LQs near zero.

Riverside County is on a strong upward trajectory, consistently outperforming peer regions in job creation and business formation. To evolve from a fast follower into a regional leader, the County must address key structural challenges, particularly in workforce readiness and industry diversification. With strategic investments in education, infrastructure, and targeted sector development, Riverside County is well-positioned to become an innovation-driven economy over the next decade, setting a new benchmark for growth and adaptability across the Western U.S. and outperforming peer communities.

An LQ of 1.0 indicates that an industry's concentration (percentage of total jobs) in a local area is the same as the national average.



// Workforce Development Integration

Closing Gaps, Unlocking Potential

As global markets shift, technologies advance, and demographic pressures reshape industries, Riverside County must proactively adapt to remain competitive. Understanding and responding to the changing demands of key industry sectors is not just important, it is essential for sustained economic growth and long-term regional resilience.

Riverside County faces a unique mix of challenges and opportunities. Rapid technological innovation, significant demographic shifts, climate-related policy changes, and evolving global dynamics are converging to redefine the landscape of economic development. These forces underscore the urgent need for robust, flexible, and forward-thinking workforce development strategies that align education and training with both current and emerging industry needs.

Benchmarking Riverside County against peer and aspirational counties across the U.S. reveals a mixed picture. The County excels in Transportation and Logistics and Hospitality and Tourism, sectors that have long been regional strengths. However, it lags in five critical areas that are increasingly driving national and global competitiveness: Advanced Manufacturing, Agricultural Technology, Clean Energy Technology, Cybersecurity, and Video Production and Distribution.

Compounding this challenge is a pronounced skills gap. While 24% of the adult population holds a bachelor's degree, nearly 25% lack a high school diploma. This imbalance limits the County's ability to attract and grow industries that depend on highly skilled talent and advanced technical capabilities.

Closing this gap is not only possible, but also already underway. Initiatives like OneFuture Coachella Valley demonstrate the power of collaborative, industry-led models that bring together public agencies, educational institutions, employers, and community organizations. These partnerships are essential to identifying strengths, addressing weaknesses, and building a resilient, skilled, and competitive workforce.

By aligning workforce development with priority industry cluster/ sector growth, Riverside County can lay the foundation for a more diversified economy, greater regional resilience, and a leadership role in the innovation-driven priority industries of the future.

Advanced Manufacturing

Riverside County's advanced manufacturing base remains underrepresented compared to peer regions, particularly in aerospace, semiconductors, and medical devices. Employers report gaps in production, industrial maintenance, and automation skills. The County, however, has strong foundations for growth, including development-ready sites along major highways, rail, and air corridors, three Foreign Trade Zones, and a large, young labor pool supported by UC Riverside, California State University campuses, and community colleges. To convert these advantages into jobs and investment, the County could certify pre-entitled priority sites for clean, high-value manufacturing, bundle state and federal incentives with local tools to de-risk capital expenditures, and expand work-based learning, short-cycle credentials, and apprenticeships aligned to mechatronics, robotics, and quality assurance. A coordinated business attraction program targeting supplier co-location and scale-up manufacturing, coupled with partnerships for shared lab and pilot production space, will build an innovation-driven manufacturing ecosystem, raise wages, and strengthen regional competitiveness.

AgTech

Riverside County's agricultural economy spans Coachella Valley produce, Temecula vineyards, and Palo Verde row crops. Local colleges such as College of the Desert, Mt. San Jacinto College, and Palo Verde College offer certificates in irrigation, pest management, and food safety. UCR Extension's modern agriculture certificate introduces automation and sensors, but precision agriculture tools like drone scouting and GIS mapping are still underutilized. To address these gaps, the County should launch a smart farm demonstration site jointly operated by UCR and local colleges to pilot advanced technologies and host internships. Bilingual micro-credential programs for incumbent farmworkers can improve access to training, while a rotating internship exchange with growers and ag-tech startups will strengthen industry connections and accelerate adoption of innovative practices.

Biotech

Riverside County's biotech sector is poised for growth, anchored by UC Riverside's life sciences research and medical innovations, including genomics, bioengineering, and agricultural biotechnology. The region benefits from proximity to major Southern California biotech hubs, but lacks dedicated wet lab space, incubators, and commercialization support for early-stage ventures. While UCR and CSU campuses offer strong bioscience curricula, industry-aligned training in biomanufacturing, regulatory affairs, and clinical data management remains limited. To accelerate sector development, the County should establish a biotech innovation corridor linking UCR, local hospitals, and industrial parks with shared lab facilities and pilot-scale production space. A modular biomanufacturing certificate, covering GMP standards, cell culture, and quality control, could be introduced at community colleges, with stackable pathways into CSU and UC programs. Paid internships with biotech firms, CROs, and public health labs will strengthen experiential learning. A coordinated business attraction strategy targeting diagnostics, bioinformatics, and agricultural biotech firms can leverage Riverside's research assets, talent pool, and available industrial land to build a globally competitive biotech ecosystem.

Clean Energy

Riverside County is emerging as a clean energy hub, with strong solar training led by GRID Alternatives and College of the Desert. SunLine Transit Agency adds specialized zero-emission bus maintenance training. Palo Verde College's solar technician program and HVAC offerings at Moreno Valley and Norco colleges provide solid foundations, but lack exposure to battery storage, microgrids, and hydrogen systems. To

close these gaps, the County should deploy a mobile clean tech lab rotating through Blythe, Hemet, and Coachella Valley. Modular certificates in energy storage and microgrid controls should be added to existing programs, and training should be aligned with electrician apprenticeships and CSU engineering pathways to create seamless career advancement opportunities. UC Riverside's Center for Environmental Research and Technology (CE-CERT) leads applied research in sustainable transportation, air quality, and energy systems, and partners with CARB's on one of the most advanced vehicle emissions testing centers globally, on zero-emission vehicle technologies and other innovations.

Creative Media & Digital Production

Riverside City College, College of the Desert, and UCR offer strong media programs that connect Inland Empire creatives to the Los Angeles market. High school media academies across the County prepare students for production roles, but rural access to professional studios and internships is limited. Curricula seldom cover digital distribution economics, emerging platforms, or monetization strategies. To address these limitations, the County should deploy a mobile production lab with 4K cameras, LED lighting, and portable editing bays rotating through Blythe, Hemet, and Temecula. A concise digital distribution and monetization certificate should be introduced, covering OTT platforms, analytics, and rights management. A Countywide internship consortium with regional film offices, advertising agencies, and streaming startups will guarantee an on-set or post-production experience for students. Evening boot camps in short-form branded content production can support rapid reskilling for career changers.

Cybersecurity

Riverside City College's NSA-designated Cyber Defense program anchors the County's cyber talent pipeline, supported by CSU San Bernardino's Palm Desert campus and UCR Extension. Indio High School's network systems pathway prepares students for A+ and CCNA certifications, but advanced labs are concentrated in western Riverside and San Bernardino, creating geographic inequities. Community colleges other than RCC rarely cover cloud security, operational technology security, or digital forensics. To expand access and deepen expertise, satellite cyber labs should be established at College of the Desert and Mt. San Jacinto College using virtual ranges shared with RCC. A Countywide dual credit sequence should enable high school students to complete RCC's cyber certificate within a year of graduation. Additionally, post-associate credentials in cloud and operational technology security co-taught by cloud providers and local utilities, along with paid apprenticeships in County IT departments, healthcare systems, and logistics firms, will strengthen the pipeline.

Hospitality & Tourism

Hospitality is a cornerstone of Riverside County's economy, with world-class resorts in the Coachella Valley, wineries in Temecula, and culinary destinations across the Coachella Valley. College of the Desert offers hospitality management degrees, Riverside City College operates a public culinary academy, and CSU campuses in Palm Desert and Temecula deliver bachelor-level hospitality concentrations. Martha's Village in Indio provides barrier-free culinary training. However, advanced coursework in luxury services, sustainability, and digital marketing is limited, especially in resort-heavy desert communities. To address this, the County should introduce a post-baccalaureate certificate in hotel revenue management, sustainability practices, and digital marketing. Pop-up culinary labs at partner resorts in Coachella Valley can localize training and support direct hiring. A cooperative education model rotating students through wineries, resorts, and event venues during peak seasons will enhance experiential learning and improve retention.

Transportation and Logistics

Riverside County’s logistics infrastructure is highly developed, with various support programs at Moreno Valley College, Norco College, and College of the Desert. SunLine’s zero-emission bus center and K–12 automotive pathways add alternative fuel skills. However, eastern communities lack full program access, and analytics training is missing from current certificates. To fill these gaps, the County can promote additional logistics centers of excellence that advance innovation, a warehouse simulation floor, and evening supervisory academy. Riverside County can position itself to integrate emerging technologies, such as AI-driven routing, autonomous freight systems, and smart inventory platforms, into its logistics workforce strategy. A short supply chain leadership certificate emphasizing communication, lean operations, and team management should be added. Coordination between EV technician programs and fleet operators must be strengthened, and logistics analytics micro-credential teaching SQL, dashboarding, and AI routing will help technicians advance into analyst roles.

Business Retention, Recruitment and Expansion

Riverside County’s economic development strategy is built around a focused approach to supporting key industries through targeted business retention, recruitment, and expansion efforts. The County prioritizes major sectors such as logistics, healthcare and life sciences, advanced manufacturing and technology, tourism, and agribusiness. These sectors have unique needs, such as infrastructure development, access to skilled labor, research partnerships, and sustainability initiatives.

To meet the needs of these industries, Riverside County offers a range of supportive programs and tools. These include industry-specific networking events, such as Innovation Month, which connect businesses with investors and peers. Riverside County also fosters strong public-private partnerships with universities and workforce development agencies to ensure a steady pipeline of talent and innovation. Additionally, Riverside County provides support and access to business incentive programs, including state and federal tax credits and grants, to encourage both new investment and the expansion of existing operations.

These efforts reflect a comprehensive strategy to create a business-friendly environment that supports long-term economic growth and resilience across the region. The following table highlights the existing programs available to businesses by key industry.

Program Name/Resource	Adv. Mfg.	AgTech	Biotech	Clean Economy	Healthcare	Logistics	All
Advanced Manufacturing Production Credit (45X)	✓			✓			
Business Assistance NOW Program (County of Riverside)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CAEATFA Sales and Use Tax Exclusion (STE)	✓	✓		✓			
California Capital Access Program (CalCAP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
California Competes Tax Credit (CCTC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (IBank)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Program Name/Resource	Adv. Mfg.	AgTech	Biotech	Clean Economy	Healthcare	Logistics	All
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) Grants			✓		✓		
California Research & Development Tax Credit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
California State Trade Expansion Program (STEP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Capital Investment Incentive Program (CIIP)	✓	✓					
Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Program	✓	✓		✓		✓	
CHIPS Act Semiconductor Incentives	✓						
Commercial Clean Vehicle Credit (45W)	✓	✓		✓		✓	
EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program	✓		✓		✓		
Employment Training Panel (ETP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Energy Efficiency & Sustainability Rebates (SCE & SoCalGas)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Export-Import Bank Export Assistance	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Film & Television Tax Credit (Program 4.0)							✓
Foreign Trade Zones	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HUBZone Program	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Hybrid & Zero-Emission Truck/Bus Voucher (HVIP)	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Industrial Development Bonds (IDBs)	✓	✓				✓	
Manufacturing & R&D Equipment Sales Tax Exemption	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
New Employment Credit (NEC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
On-the-Job Training Wage Reimbursements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Opportunity Zones (OZ)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Program Name/Resource	Adv. Mfg.	AgTech	Biotech	Clean Economy	Healthcare	Logistics	All
Qualifying Advanced Energy Project Credit (48C)	✓	✓		✓			
Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ)	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Renewable Energy Investment Tax Credit (ITC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit (PTC)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Research & Development Tax Credit (Section 41)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Riverside County Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Riverside County Small Business THRIVE Program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Riverside Public Utilities Energy Efficiency Rebates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SBA Loan Programs (7(a), 504 & Microloan)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self-Generation Incentive Program (SGIP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) & STTR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Small Business Loan Guarantee Program (SBLGP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southern California Edison Economic Development Rate (EDR)	✓	✓		✓		✓	
USDA Business & Industry Loan Guarantee Program		✓		✓			
Veterans Business Resources NOW Program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Economic Growth Strategies, 2024, Appendix J

Business Incentives and Assistance

Riverside County and local jurisdictions have adopted a range of administrative policies and tools to support economic development, including streamlined permitting programs and business assistance services. However, the effectiveness of these tools is often constrained by broader regulatory and fiscal frameworks, particularly the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Proposition 13, which influence land-use, infrastructure investment, and local revenue generation. This section provides a review of local policies, regulatory frameworks, and incentive program alignment, while identifying opportunities for strategic improvement in the design and delivery of business incentives.

Local Policies and Regulatory Frameworks

Expedited Permitting and Business Assistance Programs

These programs are designed to foster a business-friendly environment by streamlining approvals and reducing bureaucratic barriers. In principle, they support EDSP/CEDS goals around responsiveness and efficiency. However, compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) often results in substantial delays, undermining the intended impact. Despite local efforts, which include full use of CEQA statutory, categorical and ministerial exemptions, state-level regulatory constraints remain a significant obstacle to timely project implementation.

Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs)

EIFDs offer a promising tool for funding critical infrastructure aligned with EDSP/CEDS priorities. They enable long-term investment in transportation, utilities, and public facilities. Yet, the requirement for voter approval to issue bonds introduces uncertainty and can delay or derail projects. This limits the reliability of EIFDs as a mechanism for advancing strategic infrastructure goals.

Fiscal Constraints from Proposition 13

Proposition 13 restricts local governments from adjusting property tax rates, severely limiting their ability to offer tax-based incentives. This constraint reduces fiscal flexibility and hampers the County's capacity to use property tax tools to attract or retain businesses. As a result, alignment with EDSP/CEDS objectives around competitive incentive structures is weakened.

Incentive Program Alignment

Incentive programs available within Riverside County broadly reflect the goals of the EDSP/CEDS, although with some gaps and limitations:

Advanced Manufacturing Incentives and California Competes Tax Credit

These programs are highly effective in supporting EDSP/CEDS goals. They attract high-quality jobs, promote innovation, and encourage regional diversification. Their strategic focus on growth industries makes them valuable tools for recruitment and expansion.

Opportunity Zones and New Markets Tax Credits

These federal incentives align with EDSP/CEDS goals around equity and community resilience by channeling investment into economically distressed areas. However, their complexity often favors large firms and institutional investors, limiting accessibility and impact for small and mid-sized businesses.

Workforce Development Programs

State and local workforce training initiatives are well-aligned with EDSP/CEDS objectives. They address critical skills gaps, improve job quality, and create direct pathways to employment. These programs are essential for building a resilient and adaptable labor force.

Clean Economy Incentives

Incentives supporting clean energy are directly aligned with sustainability and resilience goals. However, legislative uncertainty at the state and federal levels may affect their predictability and long-term effectiveness, potentially discouraging investment.

Local Business Assistance Programs

Programs such as revolving loan funds and Small Business Development Center (SBDC) services support entrepreneurship and small business growth. While they align with EDSP/CEDS objectives, limited funding and reach constrain their overall impact compared to larger-scale initiatives.

Opportunities for Strategic Improvement

Despite broad alignment, several systemic issues hinder the full realization of Riverside County's economic development strategy:

Regulatory Constraints (CEQA): The complexity and time requirements of CEQA compliance continue to delay critical projects, reducing the effectiveness of local incentives and strategic initiatives.

Fiscal and Political Limitations: Proposition 13 and related measures restrict revenue generation and fiscal flexibility. The need for voter approval for new taxes or bonds further limits the County's ability to finance transformative economic development efforts.

Interjurisdictional Inconsistency: Variation in incentive availability, administrative capacity, and policy implementation across municipalities creates uneven conditions for business development. This fragmentation complicates coordinated, Countywide progress toward EDSP/CEDS goals.

Site Selection Factors

Riverside County is primed for accelerated economic growth, backed by strategic advantages in location, business climate, and innovation capacity. Its proximity to major markets, ports, and transportation corridors positions it as a natural hub for logistics, advanced manufacturing, and clean energy. Industries such as aerospace and climate tech benefit from this connectivity and a growing talent pipeline supported by local colleges and universities. The County's commitment to sustainability and alignment with state-level clean energy goals further strengthen its appeal to future-focused industries.

To fully capitalize on these strengths, Riverside County must proactively address persistent challenges that could constrain growth. Workforce readiness—especially in technical and specialized fields like biotech, clean energy, and creative media—requires targeted investment in education and training. Infrastructure gaps, including broadband and utility capacity, continue to impact rural and industrial areas. Regulatory complexity, particularly in sectors like agriculture, biotech, and aerospace, can slow innovation and development. This chart shows the results of a site selection review of local policies, regulatory frameworks, and incentive program alignment, identifying actionable opportunities to enhance business competitiveness and unlock the county's full economic potential.

Category	Advanced Manufacturing	Agribusiness	Defense/Military	Tourism	Clean Energy	Aerospace	Biotech	Creative Media/Entertainment
Strategic Geographic Location	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Infrastructure & Logistics	✔	▲	✔	▲	✔	✔	▲	▲
Workforce & Talent	▲	▲	✔	▲	▲	▲	▲	✔
Business Environment	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Innovation & Technology	✔	▲	✔	▲	✔	✔	✔	✔
Sustainability & Environment	✔	✔	▲	✔	✔	▲	▲	✔
Policy & Regulation	▲	▲	✔	▲	✔	▲	▲	▲

Key:

✔ Meets Need | ▲ Needs Improvement



// Strategic Direction/Action Plan

Riverside County is driving a new era of growth rooted in innovation, strategic investment, and a commitment to regional competitiveness. This strategic framework connects vision to action—organizing key priorities such as industry diversification, clean energy, workforce development, and infrastructure investment into a cohesive plan for long-term prosperity. Together, these pillars position the region to lead in economic competitiveness and community vitality across Southern California and beyond.

Vision for Riverside County's Economic Future

Riverside County is emerging as a dynamic economic hub fueled by innovation, sustainability, and opportunity. By advancing industries like advanced manufacturing, technology, and the creative sector, we're creating quality jobs, attracting global talent, and opening paths to prosperity. Strategic investments in infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and economic resilience are building strong, thriving communities. Together, we are positioning Riverside County as a leader in economic growth, environmental stewardship, and cultural vitality—shaping the future of Southern California and beyond.

Strategic Direction

Industry Diversification and Growth

Aims to strengthen the local economy by modernizing traditional sectors and strategically expanding into high-growth industries. This includes attracting new businesses through tailored incentives, supporting retention and expansion of existing businesses, promoting the region as a destination for innovation, fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, and investing in infrastructure that supports emerging technologies and specialized industries.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Identify and market shovel-ready sites based on target industry opportunity.
- Develop industry consortiums to foster collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and workforce partners.

Clean Energy and Sustainability

Focuses on aligning economic development with environmental stewardship by promoting clean energy investments, modernizing infrastructure, and supporting climate resilience initiatives. This includes leveraging public-private partnerships, securing funding for remediation and revitalization projects, and incentivizing businesses to adopt sustainable technologies and practices.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Advocate for the implementation of Community Choice Aggregators in Riverside County to provide locally controlled electricity at competitive prices.
- Partner with lithium extraction and geothermal companies to encourage supply chain businesses and end users of minerals to locate in Riverside County.

Workforce Development and Talent Attraction

Seeks to build a resilient talent pipeline by aligning education and training with industry needs, expanding access to skill-building opportunities, and creating programs to attract and retain a skilled workforce. This includes fostering partnerships between employers and educators, supporting vocational and technical training, and offering incentives to draw talent to the region.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Develop and launch the “Riverside County Plus One” program, a workforce and talent retention strategy designed to support the partners of newly relocated professionals, especially in sectors like healthcare, education, tech, and government, by helping them find meaningful employment and community connections.
- Establish a Countywide Career Pathways Report Card & Summit to annually assess and showcase progress in expanding access to career pathways through digital learning, certifications, and workforce training, while fostering collaboration among education, industry, and community partners.

Infrastructure Improvements

Supports long-term economic growth by investing in modern, efficient infrastructure systems. This includes enhancing transportation networks to improve mobility and trade, expanding digital connectivity, and updating land-use policies to support mixed-use development. The strategy also aims to reduce commuter traffic by promoting live-work communities and strengthening regional logistics corridors.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Develop model ordinances that provide for adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings (strip malls, warehouses, etc.) into mixed-use spaces.
- Develop model ordinances that provide for hybrid, mixed-use zoning districts, transit-oriented development and flexibility in use-based zoning.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystems

Promotes a dynamic business environment by supporting startups, small businesses, and innovation-driven enterprises. This includes expanding access to capital, creating collaborative innovation spaces, streamlining regulations, and fostering mentorship networks. The strategy also encourages digital transformation and continued investment in entrepreneurial support systems.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Hold “Next Wave Venture Capital Forum” to connect emerging, next generation of startups to potential investors.
- Utilize and expand RivCo Small Business Thrive Program as a connection point and referral network for small business financing options.

Regional Connectivity and Trade Expansion

Aims to enhance economic integration by strengthening partnerships across jurisdictions and positioning the region as a strategic hub for trade and investment. This includes coordinating development efforts, promoting business relocation, and fostering collaboration among public and private stakeholders to support cohesive, cross-regional growth.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- International Consulate Engagement Program which will position Riverside County as a premier destination for FDI, trade partnerships and cultural exchange, by hosting targeted visits from international consulates.
- Create/host SelectUSA investment summit (or spinoff event) or create “Invest RivCo” summit with emphasis on FDI.

Regional Branding and Tourism

Focuses on elevating the region’s identity by promoting its unique assets, cultural richness, and quality of life. This includes launching cohesive branding campaigns, investing in signature events to attract visitors, and integrating tourism with broader economic development efforts to amplify marketing and business opportunities.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Develop and distribute brand activation toolkit to economic development partners to utilize branding assets and messaging across the region as applicable.
- Create Countywide portal for events that take place within the County and distribute among the visitor network.

Quality of Life and Community Development

Concentrates on creating healthy and vibrant communities by expanding access to affordable housing, healthcare, and public amenities. This strategy supports placemaking efforts that enhance public spaces and cultural assets, while promoting livability and long-term community well-being.

Highlighted Strategic Actions:

- Encourage the development of clinics, hospitals or deployment of mobile health clinics to areas of need within the county.
- Develop a subregional mobility and connectivity framework that integrates complete streets, public transit, and rail to create safer, more accessible, and multimodal transportation options across Riverside County.

The following shows the incentives available to assist in the attraction, retention and expansion of target industry clusters.

Advanced Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Manufacturing Production Credit CAEATFA Sales and Use Tax Exclusion California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit Capital Investment Incentive Program CHIPS Act Semiconductor Incentives Employment Training Panel Foreign Trade Zones Manufacturing & R&D Equipment Sales Tax Exemption
AgTech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAEATFA Sales and Use Tax Exclusion California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit Capital Investment Incentive Program Employment Training Panel Foreign Trade Zones Manufacturing & R&D Equipment Sales Tax Exemption
Biotech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Institute for Regenerative Medicine California Research & Development Tax Credit Employment Training Panel Manufacturing & R&D Equipment Sales Tax Exemption
Clean Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced Manufacturing Production Credit CAEATFA Sales and Use Tax Exclusion California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit Employment Training Panel Renewable Energy Investment Tax Credit Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit
Creative Media/Digital Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit Employment Training Panel Film & Television Tax Credit
Cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit CHIPS Act Semiconductor Incentives Employment Training Panel
Hospitality and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit Employment Training Panel
Transportation & Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Capital Access Program California Competes Tax Credit California Research & Development Tax Credit Employment Training Panel Foreign Trade Zones

Goal 1: Industry Diversification & Growth

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
1.1	Enhance and modernize traditional industries like tourism, defense, and agriculture while strategically expanding into advanced sectors such as clean energy, aerospace, biotech, creative media, technology, advanced manufacturing, and entertainment/media.				
	a	Advanced Manufacturing: Establish sites (see 1.2) program that identifies key opportunities for advanced manufacturing as well as biotech, technology and aerospace.	High	1	\$
	b	Advanced Manufacturing: Expand supply chain analysis to identify large suppliers that are outside of the region for expansion closer to customers.	Med	1	\$\$
	c	Advanced Manufacturing: Support ongoing funding for SoCal OASIS Park (see 1.5).	Med	2	\$\$\$
	d	Agribusiness: Identify innovations used in agriculture and introduce them to industry, particularly as early adopters.	Med	2	\$
	e	Agribusiness: Create model land-use and zoning policies that promote agribusiness innovation such as agrivoltaics, microgrids and water conveyance.	Med	2	\$
	f	Tourism: Implement digital kiosks or mobile apps that increase visitor experiences and promote in-county tourism opportunities.	Med	3+	\$\$\$
	g	Clean Energy: Launch community based microgrid projects in commercial and industrial districts where scale is applicable.	High	1	\$
	h	Advanced Manufacturing: Identify Aerospace companies in the SoCal market that are in expansion mode and assist with expansion to Riverside County.	High	1	\$
	i	Creative Media: Support the development of coworking spaces, sound stages and studio-style lots with an initial focus on indie creators and digital media start-ups.	Med	3+	\$
	j	Research & Development/Manufacturing: Advocate for the creation of sector-focused business parks or industrial areas that are developed with amenities for use by target industries (labs for biotech, studios for media).	High	2	\$
	k	Lithium and Batteries: Promote manufacturing and supply chain opportunities as part of a related focus on climate resilience planning (see 2.1).	High	1	\$
1.2	Establish sector-specific business attraction & retention programs with tailored incentives.				
	a	Incentives: Expand existing Foreign Trade Zone designations to focus on Advanced Manufacturing attraction.	High	1	\$\$
	b	Sites: Identify state and federal owned surplus property that can be transferred to local control for innovative development.	Low	3+	\$

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Goal 1: Industry Diversification & Growth

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
	c	Sites: Identify and market shovel-ready sites based on target industry opportunity.	High	1	\$\$\$
	d	Resources: Designate a RivCoED staff member to serve as industry sector ambassador.	Low	1	\$
	e	Incentives: Bundle state and federal grants, tax credits and incentives with local incentives.	Med	1	\$
	f	Business Retention/Expansion: Continue deployment of County's existing business retention and expansion program resources and integrate with new activities and resources as outlined in EDSP.	Med	2	\$
1.3	Launch targeted marketing campaigns to position Riverside County as a hub for emerging industries.				
	a	Marketing: Create videos and collateral material (digital) to highlight attributes for emerging industries.	Med	2	\$\$
	b	Marketing: Create editorials and advertorials for trade publications within targeted industries.	Med	2	\$\$
	c	Marketing: Create a Team California type approach where Riverside County brings groups together for trade shows and events.	Med	2	\$\$
	d	FDI: Host international trade forum/roundtable highlighting the FDI investment in the County.	High	1	\$\$
1.4	Develop industry consortiums to foster collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and workforce partners.				
	a	Advanced Manufacturing Alliance: Establish Advanced Manufacturing Alliance that would focus work on technology adoption and innovation, supply chain resilience and business recruitment support.	High	1	\$
	b	Clean Energy & Sustainability Collaborative: Establish collaborative that would focus on coordination of microgrid and other development across jurisdictions and serve as advocate for increased transmission and distribution in the County.	High	1	\$
	c	Health & Life Sciences Partnership: Group would facilitate partnerships between higher education and existing industry to create shared lab space, incubators, accelerators and other activities that increase commercialization of biotech and other life sciences.	High	1	\$
	d	Logistics & Supply Chain Innovation Network: To accelerate innovation, resilience, and sustainability in logistics and supply chain operations across Riverside County by fostering collaboration among industry leaders, technology providers, academic institutions, and public agencies.	High	1	\$
	e	Creative Economy and Digital Media Hub: Would cultivate a vibrant ecosystem for creative professionals and digital media innovators in Riverside County by fostering collaboration, entrepreneurship, and access to cutting-edge tools, spaces, and talent—positioning the region as a dynamic center for storytelling, design, and digital production.	High	1	\$

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Goal 1: Industry Diversification & Growth

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
1.5	Secure funding for innovation-focused infrastructure, such as clean energy, biotech or other specialized campuses.				
	a	Investment: Leverage federal and state grant programs such as USED, DOE, NIST, CEC to fund innovation/research centers.	Med	2	\$
	b	Innovation: Expand biotechnology and life sciences infrastructure (lab space, wet labs, scaled manufacturing) to support additional commercialization.	Med	3	\$\$\$
	c	Partnerships: Collaborate with anchor companies, utilities and developers to co-invest in development of building space suitable for innovation firms.	Med	2	\$
	d	Partnerships: Strengthen Higher Education-Industry collaboration by expanding translational research programs with a tech focus and encouragement of joint ventures.	High	1	\$

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Goal 2: Clean Energy & Sustainability

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
2.1	Align economic growth with climate resilience planning				
	a	Partnerships: Partner with lithium extraction and geothermal companies to encourage supply chain businesses and end users of minerals to locate in Riverside County.	Med	2	\$
	b	Partnerships: Foster innovation and public private partnership by supporting R&D in climate technologies, resilience analytics and development of sustainable materials and other adaptive technologies.	Med	3	\$
2.2	Expand public-private partnerships to accelerate clean energy investments and grid modernization.				
	a	Energy: Advocate for the implementation of Community Choice Aggregators in Riverside County to provide locally controlled electricity at competitive prices.	High	1	\$\$
	b	Energy: Advocate for the establishment of Distributed Energy Resources (DER) that help to reduce costs to commercial users.	High	2	\$
2.3	Secure federal and state grants for environmental remediation projects, including Salton Sea revitalization.				
	a	Revitalization: Consider the creation of a Salton Sea Infrastructure Investment Fund that can pursue state and federal grants and secure private or philanthropic contributions to invest in projects that enhance economic development.	Med	2	\$\$
	b	Partnerships: Continue to advocate for the Salton Sea revitalization efforts and leadership in investments to revitalize area.	High	1	\$
	c	Investment: Apply for EPA funding for brownfield sites that can be reutilized for commercial or industrial development.	Low	3	\$

Goal 3: Workforce Development & Talent Attraction

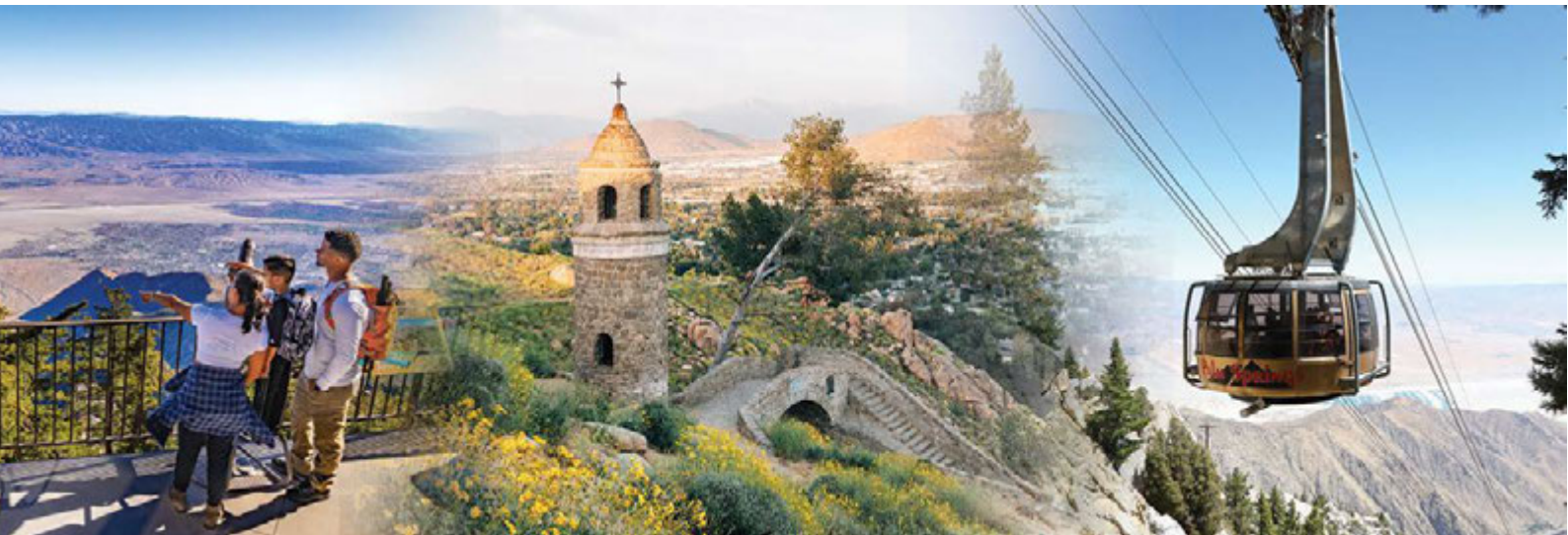
3.1	Increase industry-driven apprenticeship and internships and training programs to upskill residents in priority sectors.				
	a	Encourage the continued deployment and expansion of workforce development programs and offerings with emphasis on advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and industrial technology.	High	1	\$
	b	Training: Facilitate the creation of Rapid Skills Bootcamp(s) that would be designed as intensive, hands-on training program(s) designed to quickly upskill residents for high-demand careers in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and industrial technology in just 6 to 10 weeks.	Med	2	\$\$
	c	Innovation: Establish Logistics Tech Training Hub(s) that will equip residents with the skills and certifications in the rapidly evolving logistics and warehousing sectors, especially in areas like robotics, automation, and AI-driven operations.	Med	2	\$\$

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Goal 3: Workforce Development & Talent Attraction

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
3.2	Strengthen collaboration between educational institutions and employers to align curricula and job training with job market needs.				
	a	Workforce Development: Utilize consortiums established to serve as technical resources to ensure continued alignment between education, workforce development and industry.	Med	2	\$
	b	Workforce Development: Communicate and refer opportunities outlined in the Workforce Development Integration portion of the EDSP to the appropriate education and workforce development organizations.	Med	2	\$
3.3	Develop programs to attract and retain skilled professionals, including student loan assistance and relocation incentives.				
	a	Incentives: Develop model programs for employers that create Employer Student Loan Repayment Assistance programs, tuition reimbursement, or student loan buydown opportunities for key industry sectors and in demand workers.	Med	2	\$
	b	Incentives: Develop and launch the "Riverside County Plus One" program, a workforce and talent retention strategy designed to support the partners of newly relocated professionals, especially in sectors like healthcare, education, tech, and government, by helping them find meaningful employment and community connections.	High	1	\$
	c	Incentives: Continue to expand on needs assessments for increasing childcare options for workers, with an emphasis on facilities closer to job centers.	Med	2	\$
3.4	Increase accessibility of career pathways by expanding digital education, technical certification, and skill-building initiatives				
	a	Marketing: Establish a Countywide Career Pathways Report Card & Summit to annually assess and showcase progress in expanding access to career pathways through digital learning, certifications, and workforce training—while fostering collaboration among education, industry, and community partners.	Med	2	\$
	b	Marketing: Implement "Train Local, Hire Local" marketing campaign that would increase employer awareness and participation in local job training and certification programs by demonstrating value, building trust, and offering easy access to talent pipelines.	Low	3	\$

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Goal 4: Infrastructure Improvements

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
4.1	Advance major transportation projects that reduce congestion and improve connectivity.				
	a	Transportation: Continued investment (via RCTC) and completion of currently planned projects: I-15 express lanes, 91 eastbound corridor improvement project, mid-county parkway phase 3 and the SR-60 Potrero Interchange mid-term projects (RCTC Priorities).	High	1	\$
	b	Transportation: Continue to seek state and federal funding for other long term Regional Transportation project priorities.	Med	2	\$
	c	Rail: Continue to secure investments for rail and transit improvements with priority of mobility to and from workplaces and attraction of visitors from other parts of the SoCal region.	Med	2	\$
4.2	Upgrade digital infrastructure by expanding broadband access for businesses and residents.				
	a	Broadband: Continued implementation of Broadband Master Plan with a focus on areas with low subscription rates, limited speed tiers and gaps in last mile infrastructure.	High	2	\$
	b	Broadband: Apply for federal, state and private funds to improve broadband access, digital literacy and Tech On Wheels program.	Med	2	\$
4.3	Modernize zoning and land-use policies to promote mixed-use developments that integrate work, living, and recreational spaces.				
	a	Land-use: Develop model ordinances that provide for hybrid, mixed-use zoning districts, transit-oriented development and flexibility in use-based zoning.	Med	2	\$
	b	Land-use: Develop model ordinances that provide for adaptative reuse of underutilized buildings (strip malls, warehouses, etc.) into mixed-use spaces.	High	1	\$
	c	Permitting: Encourage the streamlining of permits for mixed-use projects, particularly live/work style projects.	Med	2	\$
4.4	Reduce commuter traffic by enabling residents to live and work in the same region.				
	a	Development: Encourage development of remote work facilities that offer high-speed internet, ergonomic workspaces, and collaborative environments for individuals who work remotely (thereby reducing commuting, supporting local, and promoting work-life balance.	Low	2	\$
4.5	Expand basic (water, sewer, drainage) infrastructure capacity to facilitate job growth in key industries.				
	a	Infrastructure: Encourage the continued expansion of basic infrastructure (water, sewer, drainage) that is under local control and serve key industry sectors.	High	2	\$
	b	Infrastructure: Seek/support federal and state grant investments for increasing local service capacity.	High	2	\$

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	c	Infrastructure: Create model ordinance that encourages on-site water treatment, reuse or other on-site recycling programs that divert wastewater, process water, and/or solid waste from collection systems.	Low	3	\$
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Goal 5: Entrepreneurship & Innovation Ecosystems

5.1	Expand access to startup capital through venture funds, microloans, and local investment networks.				
	a	Financing: Establish a Catalyst Capital Network which would connect venture capitalists to businesses as a catalyst for innovation and growth.	High	1	\$
	b	Financing: Hold "Next Wave Venture Capital Forum" to connect emerging, next generation of startups to potential investors.	Med	2	\$
	c	Financing: Utilize and expand RivCo Small Business Thrive Program as a connection point and referral network for small business financing options.	High	1	\$\$
5.2	Encourage technology adoption and digital transformation for businesses.				
	a	Assistance: Support additional programs throughout the County to promote innovation and startups.	Med	2	\$
	b	Continue and expand Innovation Month activities to include a focus on introducing innovative technologies to local businesses.	High	1	\$
5.3	Continue supporting small businesses and entrepreneurship.				
	a	Assistance: Expand Business Assistance NOW Program page to include links and resources for Countywide business assistance.	Med	2	\$
	b	Sites: Encourage the development of space, building and sites options to accommodate various levels of business growth.	Low	2	\$

Goal 6: Regional Connectivity and Trade Expansion

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
6.1	Strengthen partnerships with neighboring regions and cross-border economies				
	a	Partnerships: Continue an active leadership role in Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity (IEGO) and advocate for fair distribution of state funding.	Med	1	\$
	b	Partnerships: Collaborate with neighboring counties to support projects and opportunities that generate value to Riverside County.	Med	1	\$
6.2	Position Riverside County as a manufacturing onshoring gateway for domestic and international trade.				
	a	Marketing: Create/host SelectUSA investment summit (or spinoff event) or create "Invest RivCo" summit with emphasis on FDI.	High	1	\$\$
	b	Marketing: Consider expanding the County FDI website in multiple languages to attract investment from key global areas.	Low	3	\$\$
	c	Marketing: Consider rebranding of existing resources into "Global Business Gateway: Riverside County" as a means to attract, support and scale FDI and international partnerships in the County.	Low	3	\$\$
	d	Marketing: International Consulate Engagement Program which will position Riverside County as a premier destination for FDI, trade partnerships and cultural exchange, by hosting targeted visits from international consulates.	Med	2	\$
6.3	Encourage collaboration between municipalities, businesses, developers, and residents.				
	a	Partnerships: Expand and enhance Economic Development Alliance as an opportunity to encourage continued intracounty collaboration.	High	1	\$
	b	Partnerships: Host an annual roundtable of municipalities, developers, building associations and others involved in commercial and industrial development to highlight areas of success and areas needing improvement and increased collaboration.	Med	2	\$
6.4	Coordinate development efforts across municipalities to ensure cohesive economic strategies.				
	a	Resources: Develop and maintain a comprehensive, Countywide land-use inventory that identifies and monitors the availability of developable land to support strategic planning, investment, and sustainable growth.	Low	3	\$\$
	b	Resources: Develop model (best practices) for development streamlining, permitting and incentives for use by local jurisdictions.	Med	2	\$\$

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Goal 7: Regional Branding & Tourism

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
7.1	Develop a cohesive regional branding campaign highlighting Riverside County's strengths in innovation, sustainability, and quality of life.				
	a	Marketing: Develop and distribute brand activation toolkit to economic development partners to utilize branding assets and messaging across the region as applicable.	High	1	\$\$
7.2	Invest in signature events that drive tourism and showcase the county's cultural assets.				
	a	Tourism: Support the designation of a state park in the Pass subregion.	Med	3	\$
	b	Tourism: Identify increased opportunities for agritourism.	Low	3	\$
	c	Events: Create Countywide portal for events that take place within County and distribute among visitor network.	Low	2	\$
7.3	Strengthening ties between tourism, hospitality, and local economic development initiatives that result in expanded marketing opportunities.				
	a	Tourism: Establish an immersive, hands-on boot camp designed to equip hospitality professionals, front-line staff, and community ambassadors with the knowledge and tools to elevate the visitor experience across Riverside County by exploring the region's diverse tourism assets while learning best practices in guest services, local storytelling, and destination marketing.	High	2	\$\$
	b	Tourism: Utilize key events in Riverside County (and individual communities) to promote business location opportunities.	Med	2	\$

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Goal 8: Quality of Life & Community Development

		Strategic Action	Priority	Year	Cost
8.1	Increasing affordable housing options and homeownership rates.				
	a	Community Development: Collaborate with large employers to co-develop housing on or near their campuses for employees (especially workers in key, in-demand professions).	Low	3	\$
	b	Community Development: Advocate for inclusionary housing bonuses such as increased density or reduced parking requirements for employer-sponsored housing developments.	Low	3	\$
8.2	Improve access to healthcare where lacking in region.				
	a	Quality of Life: Encourage the development of clinics, hospitals or deployment of mobile health clinics to areas of need within the county.	Med	2	\$
8.3	Activate placemaking initiatives that enhance public spaces, parks, and cultural districts.				
	a	Infrastructure: Develop a subregional mobility and connectivity framework that integrates Complete Streets, public transit, and rail to create safer, more accessible, and multimodal transportation options across Riverside County.	Med	2	\$
	b	Quality of Life: Promote the arts by encouraging investment in public art, supporting local artists and organizations, and creating arts and cultural districts that celebrate the region's diversity.	Med	2	\$
	c	Quality of Life: The Santa Ana River Trail should be elevated as a regional example by expanding access points, enhancing safety and amenities, and connecting nearby neighborhoods, parks, and transit.	Low	3	\$

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Evaluation Framework

To ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, the Evaluation Framework provides a structured approach for assessing the effectiveness of programs and initiatives aligned with the Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP). This framework emphasizes the use of targeted Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure direct outcomes, enabling Riverside County and its partners to track progress, refine strategies, and demonstrate impact across priority industry clusters. Broader economic trends can be addressed in separate Countywide reports, such as the Riverside County Regional Intelligence Report (December 2024).

Performance Measurement Guidelines



Categorize by Industry/Cluster

All performance data must be organized by relevant industry or cluster, where applicable, to support targeted analysis and strategy refinement.



Track Program Impact

RivCoED will monitor the outcomes of its internal programs and those of partner organizations (e.g., cities) when those efforts align with EDSP initiatives.



Recognition of Quality/Promising Jobs

Performance metrics related to job creation and retention will be segmented by quality jobs, promising jobs and other jobs (as defined in the Thrive Inland SoCal California Jobs First Regional Plan).



Focus on Direct Outcomes

KPIs will measure the specific impacts of EDSP-related programs and services, rather than the overall performance of the Riverside County economy.

KPIs by category

Business Attraction

- Number of business attraction leads responded to.
- Number of development sites certified through shovel ready sites or comparable programs.
- Number of new firms attracted through RivCoED (or partner) programs.
- Number of jobs created through RivCoED (or partner) business attraction programs.

Business Retention & Expansion (BRE)

- Number of businesses receiving BRE services through RivCoED programs (or partner referrals).
- Number of jobs retained through business retention services (RivCoED and partners).
- Number of jobs created through business expansion services (RivCoED and partners).

Business Startup Services

- Number of inquiries for entrepreneurial development support.
- Number of individuals or businesses receiving entrepreneurial development services/referrals (RivCoED and partners).
- Number of new business startups attributable to RivCoED (or referred partner programs).
- Participation in business training programs.
- Participation in business incubation programs.
- Dollar value of startup funding secured by firms assisted by RivCoED (or referred partners).

Workforce Development

- Number of participants in job training/certification programs tied to RivCoED targeted industry clusters.
- Numbers of job placements in RivCoED targeted industry clusters.
- Additional KPIs established by the Countywide Career Pathways Report Card.

Marketing Exposure/Resource Attraction

- Total circulation (and open rates) of RivCoED e-newsletter.
- Web traffic and analytics
- Number of tourism-promoting special events (and estimated number of participants) sponsored by RivCoED (and partners).
- Number of industry/trade shows attended by RivCoED (and partner) staff.
- Participation (number of attendees) in SelectUSA summit.
- Dollar value of grant funding secured from federal, state and regional agencies.



Economic Resilience

Economic resilience refers to the ability of an economy, whether at the level of households, firms, or entire regions, to withstand, recover from, and adapt to economic shocks or disruptions.

The following recommendations emerged from an economic resilience analysis and are embedded within the EDSP’s strategic action items. Targeted initiatives are outlined below and designed to strengthen Riverside County’s ability to withstand and adapt to locally occurring hazards. A key innovation of the EDSP is the development of the Economic Resilience Scorecard, a dynamic tool that will guide ongoing strategy refinement, track progress, and ensure that resilience remains a central pillar of the County’s economic future.

Economic Resilience Area	Strategic Focus
Strengthen Infrastructure Resilience	Identify opportunities to upgrade energy, water, and transportation systems with resilient design, redundancy, and proactive maintenance to ensure business continuity.
Bolster Healthcare Systems	Retrofit facilities, stockpile supplies, and expand telehealth and surge capacity. Ensure backup utilities and coordinated emergency response.
Support Workforce Mobility	Enable remote work through broadband investment and telework policies. Integrate preparedness into workforce training and employer partnerships.
Strengthen Supply Chains and Diversification	Encourage local production, contingency planning, and regional logistics hubs. Support industries that reduce reliance on external supply chains.

// Appendices

The following appendices are referenced in the EDSP. They can be reviewed or downloaded at the Riverside County Digital CEDS/EDSP webpage.


A	Alignment with USEDA CEDS Guidelines
B	Subregion Maps
C	Plan Development & Stakeholder Engagement
D	Glossary & Organizational Index
E	Contributing Policies & Documents
F	Economic Analysis
G	Target Industry Analysis
H	Economic Resilience Analysis
I	Full SWOT Report
J	Analysis of Business Segments, Incentive Programs, and Implementation Policies and Constraints
K	Workforce Integration Analysis
L	Benchmark Report
M	Implementation Partners
N	Projects Supported by the 2025–2030 CEDS

Endnotes

1. State of California, Department of Finance, May 2025.
2. Based on August 2025 data from CoStar Group.
3. Based on July 2025 data from the California Association of Realtors.
4. Riverside Metro Region Workforce Demand Assessment, 2024.
5. Cited percentages of knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by workers and required to secure quality jobs..
6. Riverside County Economic Forecast, CalTrans & Bureau of Labor Statistics.
7. US Census Bureau, Business Formation Statistics.
8. EGS research of state and federal funding awards in Riverside County documents.



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