

# Kern County Administrative Office



## County Administrative Center

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Board of Supervisors  
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## REPORT ON EAST KERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION STUDY

### Fiscal Impact: None

This letter is written to report the findings of the Economic Diversification Study for eastern Kern County, encompassing the communities of Boron, California City, Mojave, Ridgecrest, Rosamond, and Tehachapi.

In February 2015, your Board approved the County Administrative Office's request to apply for grant funding from the Department of Defense (DoD), Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), for a diversification study in eastern Kern County. Diversification projects sanctioned by the OEA typically focus on communities that are reliant upon military base expenditures for regional economic stability. The study is aimed at helping the six communities in east Kern plan for, and adjust to, potential defense industry cutbacks, base closures, force structure realignments, base expansion and incompatibilities between military operations and local development.

The County applied for and was awarded a \$450,000 federal grant from the DoD and was required to provide a \$50,000 in-kind match. A subsequent request for proposals (RFP) was issued and in January 2016 your Board approved the selection of TIP Strategies, Inc. (TIP) from Austin, Texas as the successful vendor. The economic diversification strategy proposed by TIP hinged on comprehensive stakeholder engagement from the six individual communities in the east Kern region. The plan focused on leveraging the region's most promising opportunities for long-term prosperity and addressing the most significant challenges. Chabin Concepts, a California-based economic development consulting firm, also assisted TIP and Kern County throughout the project.

Ultimately, TIP provided a thorough work plan and delivered services from March 2016 to approximately June 2017. TIP worked with regional leaders to gain a deep qualitative and quantitative understanding of east Kern's challenges and opportunities, which yielded a strategic foundation focused on growing the regional economy. Throughout 2016 and early 2017, the team of consultants worked with regional and local community leaders to conduct multiple site tours in each of the six communities, held 16 community meetings, and met separately with more than 55 employers and regional stakeholders. The process also included analyses of dozens of demographic and economic variables for east Kern and each of the six communities.

### ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

East Kern has an abundance of assets, competitive advantages, and opportunities, which can be leveraged for economic development.

- World-class employers, industries, and innovative workers.
- Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS)-China Lake and Edwards Air Force Base (including the NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center).
- The R-2508 Complex of restricted air space centered on NAWS-China Lake, Edwards AFB, and Fort Irwin.
- The Mojave Air & Space Port, which anchors the region's strong aerospace sector.