

The CEO Profile!

Introduction

Richard Chapman was appointed President and CEO of the Kern Economic Development Corporation (KEDC) in November 2006. Mr. Chapman's previous positions included Executive Director of the Buckeye (Arizona) Valley Development, Inc., and Vice President for the Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County. He has also held a research position with Prudential Securities. Mr. Chapman holds a Bachelor's degree in Finance from Georgetown University and a Masters of Business Administration in International Marketing from American University. He hails from Pinehurst, North Carolina, "The Golf Capital of the World."

Interview

What is the mission of KEDC?

KEDC is dedicated to ensuring a diverse and strong economic climate for all Kern County businesses. KEDC accomplishes this mission through a cluster-based client services program focused on business retention, expansion and recruitment activities.

How does KEDC go about business relocation to Kern County?

KEDC serves an ombudsman role with interested companies by delivering on the "Kern County brand":

- Part of the Southern California region
- 4-hour accessibility to 90 percent of the State's population centers and the area's freight mobility corridors
- Relative affordability of the County for businesses and families
- Recession-proof aspects of the region's economy, especially in the agriculture and energy industries
- Opportunities for real estate investors/developers to develop new inventory in an extremely tight market
- Pro-growth aspects

How does KEDC go about business retention in Kern County?

Since, local businesses represent over 85 percent of new jobs, KEDC has implemented a Business Retention and Expansion strategy. KEDC provides permitting, financing, sitting and workforce development assistance to these companies. In addition, KEDC staff visits on-site with over 100 targeted cluster companies throughout Kern County. The targeted industrial clusters are:

1. Value-added Agriculture
2. Energy and Chemicals
3. Transportation, Logistics, and Warehousing
4. Business and Professional Services

5. Tourism, Recreation, and Entertainment
6. Health Care Services and Medical Technologies
7. Aerospace and Defense

What are some of the success stories since your tenure at KEDC?

KEDC's success is measured by 27 performance indicators gauging client successes in areas ranging from capital investment, wage income, tax revenue, and square footage absorbed. Some of our recent success stories are

- KEDC being designated the steward organization of Kern County's Economic Strategy
- Successful recruitment efforts of Railex (a 300-employee agricultural distribution facility in Delano and Famous Footwear (a 350,000 square feet logistics facility at Tejon Industrial Complex)
- Development of three industrial parks (three million sq. ft. in metro Bakersfield) and a 600,000SF spec building at Tejon Industrial Complex
- Lead role in the East Kern Economic Alliance, a coalition of cities and CDPs throughout east Kern County
- Media relations strategy responsible for a six-fold increase in KEDC-cited regional and nation news impressions

How do you see the outlook of economic development in Kern County?

Very positive! Despite difficult state-wide and national economic times, Kern County has recently been honored with a bevy of "best in show" awards that KEDC excitedly has used to market to our external corporate clients, developers, and site selection firms. These awards have tended to support the recent diversification of our local economy beyond oil and agriculture and debunk overall preconceptions about Kern County's economic infrastructure. Our new industry portfolio has helped illuminate the fact that the County is home to burgeoning sectors such as logistics, aerospace and healthcare. Furthermore, Kern is not only emerging as an economic power of the Valley, but of the State as well.