



# AMADOR COUNTY

C A L I F O R N I A

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## ENTREPRENEUR CENTER OF THE SIERRAS STRATEGIC PLAN

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May 2026

YESTERDAY



TOMORROW

City of  
**SUTTER CREEK**  
1854

Contents

- Executive Summary..... 2**
- Recommendation ..... 3**
- Research and Analysis..... 4**
  - Sierra County Demographics Summary (see Appendix 1 for more details).....4
  - Market Segments .....5
  - SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).....6
  - Strategic Conclusions .....6
- Entrepreneurial Infrastructure..... 8**
  - The Innovation Ecosystem .....8
  - Current Ecosystem Supporters and Contributors .....8
  - Startup Life Cycle .....9
  - Circular Economic Principles .....9
  - Applying Circular Principles with the Startup Model .....10
  - Implement through Engagement, Education, and Mentorship.....11
    - Events, Classes, and Programs .....11
    - Mentorship and Resources.....11
  - Investors and Funding.....12
- ECS Operations, Organization, and Management ..... 13**
  - Operational Framework and Milestones .....13
  - Organizational Structure .....13
- Recommendation, Plan, and Financials..... 16**
  - Strategic Recommendation .....16
    - Why Partner with Gener8tor?.....16
  - Financial Projections and Sustainability.....18
- APPENDICES.....20**
  - Appendix 1 Current Demographics by County.....20
    - Alpine County .....20
    - Amador County .....21
    - Calaveras County .....22
    - Inyo County .....24
    - Mariposa County .....25
    - Mono County .....27
    - Tuolumne County .....28
  - Appendix 2 Circular Economy – Biomass Market .....31
    - Key Biomass Streams Relevant to Agriculture, Logging & Cattle .....31
    - Types of Circular-Economy Companies Active in California .....31
    - How These Industries Support Rural Communities .....32
    - Top Circular-Economy Champions in Central & Northern California .....32

## Executive Summary

### The Challenges of Rural California

Amador County, like many rural regions across California, faces persistent structural challenges: limited business opportunity, difficulty attracting and retaining young talent, and uneven access to technology and essential services that urban communities take for granted. These conditions are mirrored across all seven Sierra Nevada counties. While some benefit from major destinations such as Lake Tahoe and Mammoth, their economies remain heavily seasonal and vulnerable to fluctuations in tourism. Even these high-profile areas would benefit from strategies that generate year-round, good-paying jobs and strengthen long-term economic resilience.

### Vision

Amador County will achieve sustainable economic growth and diversification by establishing an entrepreneurial infrastructure that supports the organic development of local businesses while accelerating the adoption of innovative technologies and circular economic practices. The resulting framework will be designed for replication across the Sierra counties and adaptable to rural regions worldwide.

### Mission

To strengthen the economic and social vitality of Amador County and the broader Sierra region by expanding opportunities, supporting existing businesses, and building a resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem. This ecosystem will serve as a repeatable model of rural innovation that empowers communities across California.

### The Opportunity

The seven Sierra Nevada counties collectively represent approximately 192,000 residents and generate roughly \$11.6 billion in GDP. Tuolumne, Amador, and Mono counties contribute the largest shares. Despite modest populations, these counties consistently outperform expectations due to strong tourism, government, and healthcare sectors. This region offers an ideal environment for piloting an entrepreneurial ecosystem integrated with circular economic principles. The scale of the population, the commonality of business types, and the manageable technology infrastructure reduce complexity and risk, creating a practical proving ground for a new model of rural development.

### Existing Businesses and Services

While focused on innovation and startups the Entrepreneur Center of the Sierras (ECS) will serve everyone, including existing businesses. We will extend to existing business to help them with their business needs, questions, technology, and challenges. The ECS will operate under the Startup Model, applying proven processes and methodologies to nurture ideas from concept to launch. This model also applies to existing business such as releasing a new product, contemplating a fresh marketing approach, and moving into a new market.

At the center of this initiative is the **Entrepreneur Center of the Sierras (ECS)**, which will serve as the region's entrepreneurial and innovation hub. ECS will anchor the creation, testing, and launch of innovative ideas, enterprises, and solutions tailored to Amador County's and the broader region's needs. Sutter Creek has an underused facility, its historic Sutter Creek Grammar School at 121 Cole Street, which can be the physical location of the Entrepreneur Center.

### Purpose of This Plan

The primary objective of this plan is to develop and document the feasibility and most effective approach for building a regional entrepreneurial infrastructure and ecosystem that can be implemented and scaled. This document represents the foundational step in establishing an integrated, sustainable development pathway for Amador County's long-term economic and community resilience.

This is a multi-year journey that will require distinct phases of execution and collaboration across multiple counties to ensure the pathway is designed to work for the entire region. We expect to learn, adapt, and continuously refine the model to maximize impact for Amador County and the broader Sierra region.

## **Objectives**

### **Business Growth & Development**

- Support the creation of at least 10 new businesses by 2030.
- Provide direct assistance to 25 existing businesses in adopting sustainable practices.

### **Job Creation & Retention**

- Generate 50 new local jobs.
- Improve retention of young adults through workforce and entrepreneurial opportunities.

### **Entrepreneurial Infrastructure**

- Establish the Entrepreneur Center of the Sierras (ECS) as a fully operational hub for innovation, mentorship, and training.

### **Technology Access & Adoption**

- Expand access to digital tools and technology infrastructure.
- Engage 100 people and businesses in training or transition programs.

### **Circular Economy Integration**

- Implement at least three community-scale circular economy projects (e.g., waste-to-value, renewable resource use, resource-sharing systems)

### **Community Engagement**

- Establish 200 people for workshops, events, and collaborative initiatives that build a culture of entrepreneurship and sustainability.

### **Regional Framework**

- Document a scalable framework that enables successful strategies to be expanded across the region.

## **Recommendation**

A primary consideration of this plan is whether to develop the ECS in-house or partner with a specialized firm. Gener8tor is a leader in this field, establishing innovation centers across rural America. As a venture capital firm, they recognize that sustainable change requires building a complete ecosystem of entrepreneurs, investors, and corporate partners.

We recommend a three-year pilot (2026-2029) in Sutter Creek to validate this integrated framework. After analyzing both models, we believe outsourcing to Gener8tor offers the highest probability of success by leveraging their established network and expertise to accelerate regional growth.

## Research and Analysis

We aim to future-proof economic growth in Amador County by leveraging local resources and our proximity to Sacramento. By combining a startup model with circular economy principles and emerging technology, we will build long-term regional resilience.

Our strategy focuses on three primary objectives:

1. **Developing Entrepreneurial Infrastructure:** Establishing a foundation for education and formal support systems.
2. **Supporting New Ventures:** Encouraging the creation of emerging businesses and new revenue models.
3. **Modernizing Existing Businesses:** Helping local companies become more efficient, resilient, and future-ready.

Ongoing research and market analysis will guide our efforts and measure impact. Initial discovery will focus on the following key questions:

- Is there sufficient demand to ensure long-term sustainability?
- Who are our target demographics and how should we reach them?
- What are the most critical Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?
- What is the optimal business structure—for-profit or nonprofit?

To address these questions, we are benchmarking several key segments:

1. **Innovation Hubs:** Analyzing lessons learned and operational challenges from other centers.
2. **Regional Needs:** Identifying local pain points, growth barriers, and modernization opportunities.
3. **Local Demographics:** Mapping educational, financial, and institutional resources.
4. **Community Dynamics:** Understanding social engagement and non-business challenges.

Understanding these potential economic and social dynamics is essential for ensuring community involvement and adoption.

### Sierra County Demographics Summary (see Appendix 1 for more details)

**Alpine County** is a tiny, rural county with a unique demographic profile—older, small population, strong Native American presence, and high incomes. Its economy is anchored by government, healthcare, and tourism, with ski resorts and outdoor recreation providing seasonal boosts. Agriculture and forestry remain modest but historically important.

- Population: ~1,200 (2020 Census), making it California’s smallest county.
- Density: ~2.3 people per square mile.

**Amador County** is a small, rural county with an older population, modest incomes, and strong homeownership. Its economy is government-heavy, with healthcare and retail as major anchors, while tourism (wine, casinos, recreation) provides cultural and seasonal vitality. Agriculture and forestry remain modest but historically important.

- Population: ~41,029 (2023)
- Density: ~69 people per square mile

**Calaveras County** is a rural, aging community with modest income levels and a growing Hispanic population. Its economy is service-oriented, with healthcare and government leading, but tourism, construction, and agriculture remain vital. For rural development planning, Calaveras illustrates the challenge of balancing local services for an older population with economic diversification through tourism, wine, and recreation industries.

- Population: ~45,995 (2023)
- Density: ~45 people per square mile (rural, spread across 1,020 sq. miles)

**Inyo County** is a small, aging population, with high reliance on tourism and government employment, and limited private land ownership. Its economy is modest but stable, with healthcare, agriculture, and hospitality forming the backbone of local jobs. The county's unique geography — from Mount Whitney to Death Valley — makes tourism not just an industry, but a lifeline.

- Population: ~18,803 (2023 estimate)
- Density: ~1.9 people per square mile (extremely rural; second-largest county in California by land area).

**Mariposa County** Mariposa County is a small, rural county with an older population, modest incomes, and high reliance on tourism. Its economy is service-heavy, with Yosemite National Park driving hospitality, retail, and recreation. Government and healthcare provide stability, while agriculture and forestry remain modest but historically important.

- Population: ~17,060 (2023)
- Density: ~11.8 people per square mile (very rural)

**Mono County** Mono County is a small, rural county with a young-to-middle-aged population, modest incomes, and high reliance on tourism. Its economy is service-heavy, with Mammoth Lakes and outdoor recreation as the backbone. Government and healthcare provide stability, while agriculture and forestry remain modest contributors.

- Population: ~12,991 (2024 estimate)
- Density: ~4.3 people per square mile (very sparsely populated across 3,132 sq. miles)

**Tuolumne County** is a rural, aging community with modest incomes and strong reliance on healthcare, government, and tourism. Its economy is anchored by service industries and correctional institutions, while outdoor recreation and forestry provide seasonal and resource-based employment.

- Population: ~54,873 (2023)
- Density: ~24.7 people per square mile across 2,220 sq. miles

The combined population of the Sierra Counties is approximately 192,000 people. Together, these seven Sierra Nevada counties generate about \$11.6 billion in GDP, with Tuolumne, Amador, and Mono contributing the largest shares. The list below are the Key industries across the 7 Sierra Counties ranked by size and commonality across all counties.

#### Key industries

1. Government
2. Healthcare
3. Tourism/Hospitality/Recreation
4. Retail
5. Construction
6. Education
7. Agriculture/Forestry
8. Casinos/Tribal Enterprises

9. Correctional Institutions
10. Manufacturing/Resource Processing

### **Market Segments**

The following categories define our primary market segments. Each represents a distinct track, though they often overlap in practice.

- **Startups:** Innovative ideas or technologies entering untested markets. *Needs: Education, research, and validation.*
- **New Traditional Businesses:** Retail, service, or product ventures in established markets. *Needs: Ideation, validation, and business planning.*
- **Established Businesses:** Existing companies with steady revenue. *Needs: Efficiency, modernization, and growth control.*

### **Broad vs. Deep Support Strategy**

We balance our approach between reaching many people and providing intensive help where it matters most:

- **Broad Support:** Engages diverse stakeholders to build community visibility and cross-sector collaboration.
- **Deep Support:** Provides focused investment and mentoring for segments with high scalability or critical economic impact.

Success requires a situational SWOT analysis to identify how to best apply these strategies.

### **SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**

Amador County's rural nature provides a unique environment for economic testing. Its manageable scale reduces complexity, making it an ideal pilot location.

#### **Strengths**

- Manageable scale and community engagement potential.
- Strong local identity and collaborative spirit.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Rural distances and limited connectivity.
- Small population and skills gap.
- Cultural resistance to rapid change.

#### **Opportunities**

- Modernization and economic diversification.
- New business creation and innovation acceleration.
- Integration of circular economy and sustainability models.
- Available real estate

#### **Threats**

- External economic fluctuations.
- Slow adoption of modern technologies.

- Competition for talent and investment.

### **Strategic Conclusions**

Our research confirms that the Sierra region is ready for a collaborative economic framework:

- **Economic Capacity:** Strong regional GDP provides a solid foundation, though community adoption must be managed carefully.
- **Regional Commonalities:** Similar demographics across counties make shared infrastructure and services highly feasible.
- **Need for Scale:** No single county can achieve sustainable mass alone; coordinated regional action is essential.
- **Technology as a Catalyst:** Tools like AI have increased awareness of the need for proactive planning and resilience.

This evidence supports moving forward with an integrated infrastructure to strengthen local autonomy while preserving regional character.

## Entrepreneurial Infrastructure

The ECS will be the regional hub for innovation. By combining local expertise with a global network, we provide founders with world-class resources tailored to rural needs.

### The Innovation Ecosystem

We utilize a structured, repeatable pathway for turning ideas into real-world solutions through a simple sequence: **Idea → Validate → Execute.**

This ecosystem is a collaborative network of entrepreneurs, investors, and government partners working together to support founders and accelerate new ventures.



- **Yellow-circle contributors** represent the essential elements required for core operations—education, mentorship, access, and foundational support.
- **Additional contributors** expand capacity, improve efficiency, increase deal flow, and bring world-class expertise and perspective into the region.

Our role is straightforward but powerful: Ensure the right ideas reach the right people at the right time so innovation can take root and make a meaningful difference.

### Current Ecosystem Supporters and Contributors

#### Investors

- Sacramento Angels; the longest tenured investors in the Sacramento region.
- CleanStart; a 501(c)3 nonprofit that exists to empower entrepreneurs with the knowledge, capital, and connections that are critical to creating a successful new business.
- Impact Ventures Capital since 2016 they have been investing in and connecting startups to corporate partners.

#### Advisors, Resources

- Gener8tor; experience and network in rural startup model execution

- Beam Circular; industry leader and champion for curricular economy.

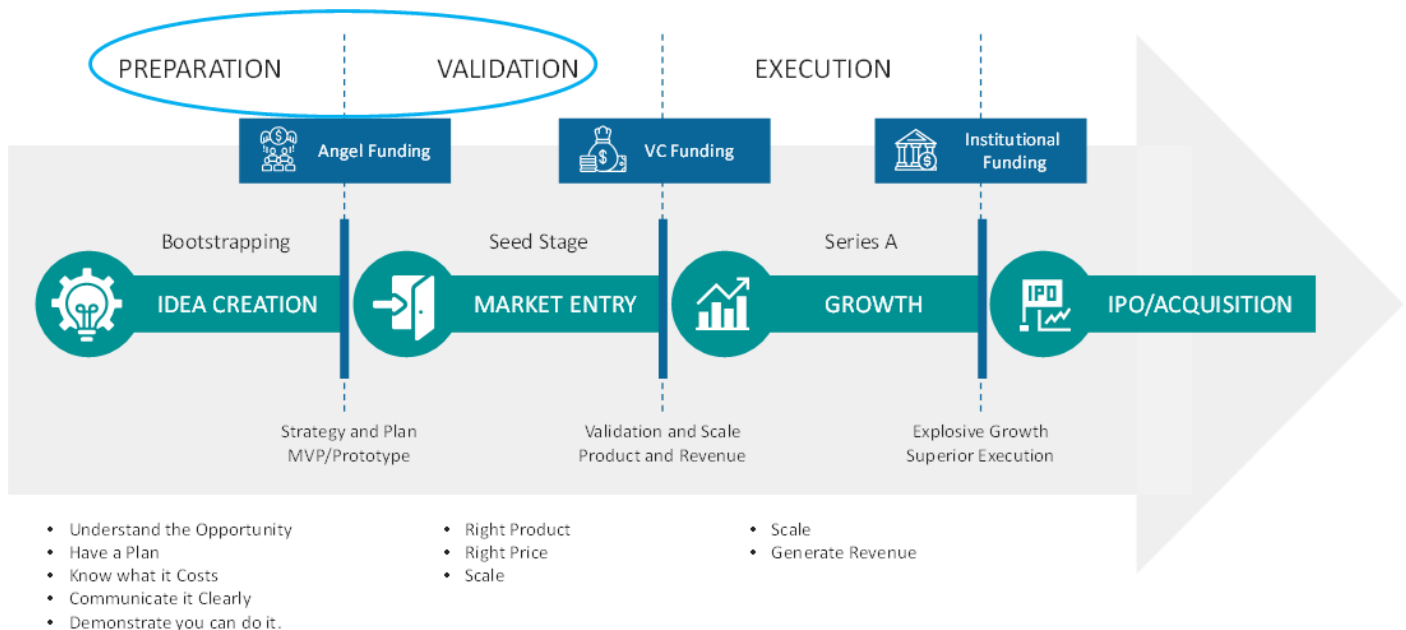
#### Universities

- Sacramento State, Carlsen Center; sponsor, resources, and collaboration.
- Columbia College; regional leader.

#### Government

- Sutter Creek
- Amador County

#### Startup Life Cycle



We will focus our efforts on the Planning and Validation stages for startups and the Growth stage for established businesses. While each initiative enters the pipeline at a different point, every new idea begins with some form of Preparation, and advances through a structured process from there.

By applying the Startup Model, we provide a disciplined, repeatable pathway for transforming ideas into viable companies, products, or services. At the same time, we recognize that innovation in rural regions requires more than a single methodology. To build a resilient and future-ready economy, we must also integrate forward-thinking frameworks such as the Circular Economy, particularly as rural biomass conversion evolves into a modern, scalable, and increasingly mature industry.

#### Circular Economic Principles

Common Definition of circular economy is an economic system designed to minimize waste and maximize the use of resources. Unlike the traditional linear economy—which follows a “take–make–dispose” model—a circular economy focuses on closing the loop by reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling materials and products. Its goal is to create a sustainable system where economic activity regenerates rather than depleting resources, benefiting both the environment and the economy.

At the core of our strategy is utilizing the startup model to identify and solve local challenges such as waste management, water treatment, energy efficiency, and resource optimization—issues common across rural regions.

Local communities will play an essential role in shaping, validating, and refining solutions, ensuring they are practical, scalable, and aligned with real-world needs. This creates a win-win-win for startups, investors, and the broader community.

### **Biomass Conversion & Circular Economy in California**

Biomass conversion is the most common application of circular economics as agriculture, logging and ranching all produce biomass waste. It is also an easy-to-understand example. However, it is not the only circular application; energy generation, water management and any waste are recognized candidates.

#### **Why Biomass & Circular Systems Matter in Rural California**

- California produces ~50 million tons of residue biomass annually from agriculture, forestry, and municipal sources.
- Rural regions—Central Valley, Sierra foothills, North State—are the primary biomass producers and stand to benefit most from circular-economy industries.
- California research shows circular bioeconomy systems can:
  - Create new rural jobs in biomass collection, processing, and transport.
  - Reduce wildfire risk by monetizing forest waste.
  - Improve water quality by reducing nitrate contamination from ag and livestock operations.
  - Increase farm and ranch profitability through waste-to-value systems.
  - Support carbon-neutrality goals by replacing fossil fuels with renewable biomass-based fuels.
  - Existing major Circular-Economy Initiatives in Central & Northern California (Statewide, strong Northern CA presence) enable borrowing of best ideas

### **Applying Circular Principles with the Startup Model**

Our strategy is grounded in practical, purposeful action tailored to the unique needs and opportunities of Amador County. Instead of relying on abstract theory, we apply startup model methodology with circular economic principles to identify locally rooted opportunities that deliver economic impact and embrace technology. Although the circular economy helps us identify opportunities and engage local communities it is not the holy grail, simply a piece of the formula. The startup model and Entrepreneurs are still the driving forces for creating new businesses and growth.

#### Leveraging the Startup Model with local communities to accelerate innovation and adoption.

1. **Generate ideas** that address local or regional challenges.
2. **Validate concepts** with businesses and communities.
3. **Develop solutions** informed by data and feedback.
4. **Validate solution** Test with real users to ensure practicality and impact.
5. **Launch and scale** business.

## Tackling Local Challenges With the Startup Model

We utilize the startup model to tackle local challenges such as waste management, energy efficiency, and resource optimization – issues common across rural regions worldwide.

Local communities play a vital role in shaping, validating, and refining solutions, ensuring they are practical, scalable, and aligned with real-world needs. This creates a win-win for investors, and the broader community



## Product Development Process



### Goals

Through this approach, we aim to:

- Leverage local expertise and emerging talent to cultivate new startups and ventures.
- Empower existing businesses to participate in the process, innovate, strengthen resilience, and unlock new revenue streams.

### Impact

By combining local expertise, customer insights, and community engagement, we can rapidly validate ideas and deliver solutions directly to users. This process not only creates new revenue opportunities but also accelerates the adoption of emerging technologies and strengthens Amador County's entrepreneurial and innovative ecosystem. The key is mobilizing local experts, diverse customer groups, and community networks. This ensures the right ideas are validated quickly and solutions reach real users faster generating new revenue streams, driving the transition to emerging technologies, and delivering lasting value for startups, businesses, and the community at large.

### **Implement through Engagement, Education, and Mentorship**

To get started we recommend partnering with an established accelerator—such as Gener8tor—to operate programs within the ECS. Leveraging a proven organization provides operational stability, reduces risk, and increases the likelihood of strong outcomes, especially during the pilot period. Their methodologies align well with our principles and allow us to implement programs that are already evaluated, refined, and effective.

In general, the Entrepreneur Center of the Sierras (ECS) will offer a full suite of workshops, events, classes, and programs focused on ideation, validation, planning, business creation, operations, and growth. To enrich these programs, we will bring in both industry leaders and local subject-matter experts who can provide practical, real-world insights.

We recognize that early-stage ventures and established businesses have unique needs. ECS programming is intentionally structured to support both—helping new founders validate ideas while enabling existing businesses to strengthen operations, pursue growth, and adopt innovative practices.

We will run a pilot with gener8tor to determine long term viability and assess in-house versus outsourced operations.

### Events, Classes, and Programs

The ECS will follow the same proven approach whether programs are operated by gener8tor or by the City. The ECS model includes a full spectrum of support: informal networking, 30-minute panels, hands-on workshops, multi-week programs, and 1-on-1 mentoring. If gener8tor operates the core ECS programs, the City will complement that

work with locally focused events, services, and community-driven support. This ensures a consistent, high-quality experience while allowing the City to tailor additional offerings to local needs.

Track 1: Startups - Focusing on innovation and business, ideation, validation, product development, and launch.

Track 2: Established Businesses - Focusing on business efficiency, staffing, day-to-day problems; marketing, sales, supply chain, leadership, compliance, and technology adoption.

Mentorship and Resources

Mentorship is the cornerstone of the ECS. We will collaborate with local specialists who understand the region and its unique challenges. However, we will also connect with non-local experts and mentors to ensure participants have access to the best possible resources and guidance. Below is an example of a standard early-stage program tailored from 1-hour online seminars to 6 - 12-week extensive programs or cohorts. You will notice a shift from classroom to 1on1 as time and expectations increase. This classroom and 1 on 1 approach also apply to non-structured webinars as well. This program is designed to build a knowledgeable, cohesive team and a sustainable business. The framework can be scaled with more detail, engagement, and expectations.

**Scalable Program for Early-Stage Companies/Entrepreneurs – Example**

Programs	Classroom	1 on 1	Expectation
Webinar Only	3	0	Introduction
Webinar Only	5	0	Learn
1 – 4 Week Basic	5.5	5	Foundation
6 - 12 Week Full	10	10	Launch

- Program can be tailored and scaled from a 3-hour webinar to 12-week immersive program with 1on1 mentorship.
- Expectations range from introductory to assessments, preliminary benchmarks/KPI's to improved operational capability and readiness.
- Programs are designed to achieve as much progress as possible within the timeframe and structure. All attendees are different.
- 1on1 engagement is the key to successful application and accelerated progress. More engagement results in more success at a faster pace.
- Programs are designed for individual enrollment but can be tailored and personalized for incubators or institutions. This includes additional content details, pass/fail criteria, etc.

**This program consists of a 5-part framework**

1. Startup Model, Ecosystems, Funding; Think like a CEO.
  2. Build your business case; vision, ideation, validation.
  3. Build your strategic plan.
  4. Build your Financial Model.
  5. Build your Pitch Deck and Pitching; Talk like a CEO.
- Closes with startups introducing and pitching their idea

**Investors and Funding**

The ECS is **not** a funding or banking entity and does not directly invest in or finance startups. All funding relationships occur **between entrepreneurs and individual investors**, independent of the ECS. Our role is to create an environment—through programming, connections, and collaboration—where those conversations can happen naturally and productively.

## ECS Operations, Organization, and Management

The following sections outline the operational framework, strategic milestones, and organizational models designed to ensure the Entrepreneur Center of the Sierras (ECS) achieves long-term sustainability and regional impact.

### Operational Framework and Milestones

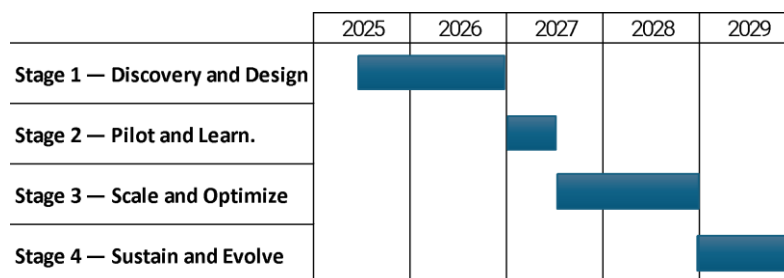
#### Key Assumptions

- **ECS role:** ECS is a central hub that provides access to services, resources, events, and programs, both paid and free.
- **Primary conduit, not owner:** The ECS will function as the primary conduit and catalyst for support; ultimate responsibility for execution and outcomes rests with the entrepreneur, startup, or business.
- **Learn-and-apply approach:** This is an iterative learn-and-apply process aimed at developing a sustainable rural economic model.
- **Iterative discovery:** We do not have all the answers today; a structured learning and testing phase will be used to validate assumptions and refine the model.

#### Implementation Stages

- **Stage 1 — Discovery and design**
  - Validate user needs, map existing resources, and design initial service offerings.
  - Run small experiments to evaluate demand and delivery assumptions.
- **Stage 2 — Pilot and learn.**
  - Launch limited pilots with selected entrepreneurs or cohorts.
  - Collect qualitative and quantitative feedback; iterate on program design and delivery.
- **Stage 3 — Scale and optimize.**
  - Expand successful pilots, standardize processes, and build partnerships.
  - Introduce revenue mechanisms and measure economic viability.
- **Stage 4 — Sustain and evolve.**
  - Transition to a self-sustaining operating model with diversified funding and clear governance.
  - Continue continuous improvement through ongoing testing, community feedback, and new offerings.

#### Success Criteria



- **Clear ownership:** Define responsibilities for the ECS and for entrepreneurs.
- **Measurable outcomes:** Track adoption, engagement, revenue, and impact metrics.
- **Feedback loops:** Embed regular review cycles to surface learnings and adjust strategy.

## Organizational Structure

Two operational models are under consideration: a City-run model and an outsourced accelerator model. While both share a fundamental governance structure, the primary difference lies in staffing for day-to-day operations, mentorship, and program execution. An outsourced model offers accelerated delivery through established networks, while a City-managed approach focuses on building local capacity over time.

## Staffing and Resourcing Strategy

- **Facilities, Resources:** Sutter Creek will provide meeting space and on demand resources; there are no fixed public office hours currently.
- **On-demand operations:** Core activities will be delivered using existing Sutter Creek staff, local subject-matter experts, and contracted specialists as needed.
- **Cost control:** Hire or open facilities only when utilization and revenue projections support the expense.
- **Scale with demand:** Move from ad-hoc support to part-time roles, then to full-time operations as programs and revenue mature.

## Current Status (May 2026)

- **Activity focus:** The ECS is currently operated by the city on an as-needed basis, concentrating on monthly events, analysis, data collection, networking, and creation of this plan.
- **Early engagement:** We have launched a series of free events and workshops to build awareness and visibility.
- We have formed strategic relationships and began filling our ecosystem with resources and experts.

## Purpose and Scope

The ECS exists to manage the local entrepreneurial ecosystem—coordinating facilities, programming, events, and community engagement. ECS curates and connects entrepreneurs to experts, resources, and service providers who deliver classes, programs, education, funding, and support.

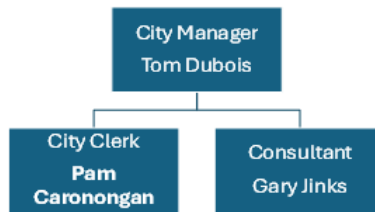
## Governance and Policies

- **Business policies:** establish finance, procurement, and contract policies appropriate for a for-profit entity.
- **Operational procedures:** Define intake, program delivery, partner onboarding, and quality assurance processes.
- **Performance monitoring:** utilization, participant outcomes, revenue/cost, and other KPI's.

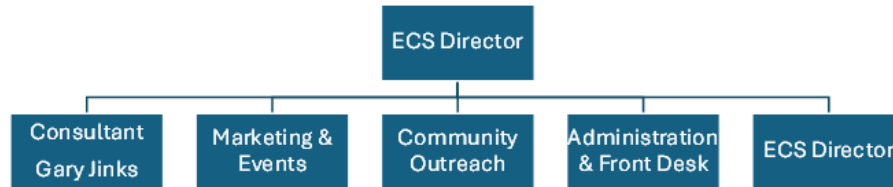
## Transition to Full Capacity

Below are notional organizational charts from now to full-time operations. Today Tom Dubois Sutter Creek City Manager is leading the effort.

Current



### Sutter Creek Fully Self-Operated



The transition from our current operating model to full, year-round operations will be driven by demonstrated demand and strategic direction. Except for the ECS Director, who will be working full-time from day one, the roles listed represent functions, not immediate or necessarily full-time positions. These responsibilities will initially be covered by existing city staff or contracted consultants until workload and utilization justify dedicated hires. If the ECS continues to be operated by ECS then the city staff will be scaled, and potentially a full-time Director will be added. In the current financial model, there is no Director if ECS is operated by gener8tor.

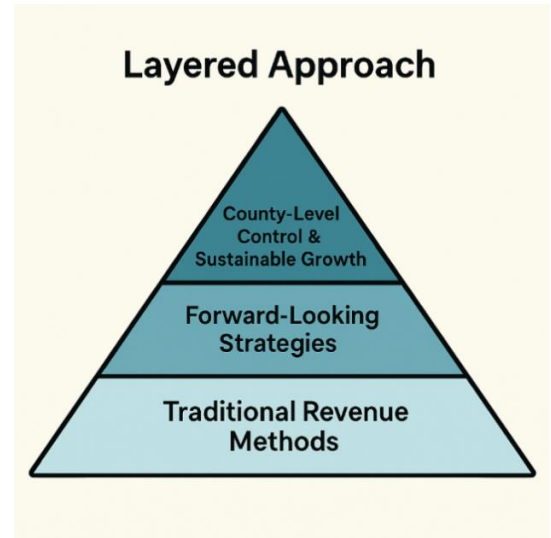
For planning purposes, full-time staffing for these additional roles is projected to begin in January 2029.

## Recommendation, Plan, and Financials

While the entrepreneurial business model offers significant potential, a rural region cannot achieve its full potential for long-term sustainability by relying solely on accelerating startups. Therefore, we advocate for a hybrid, layered approach that supports both new ventures and existing businesses.

We champion an integrated mindset that not only cultivates new companies but also revitalizes established businesses through modern services, technology integration, and the identification of new revenue opportunities.

The strategies outlined below represent this comprehensive vision for regional economic resilience.



### Strategic Recommendation

We recommend launching an outsourced pilot with an established accelerator partner, such as **gener8tor**, to rapidly validate demand, benchmark performance, and reduce operational risk. This approach allows the City to evaluate measurable results and financial viability before committing to full-time staffing or long-term contracts.

#### Why Partner with Gener8tor?

Gener8tor brings a **turn-key, nationally proven model** for entrepreneurial development. Their approach ensures seamless execution and alignment with local goals, backed by experience in communities ranging from Anchorage to Charlotte. Their value is amplified by a global network of mentors, investors, and corporate partners. As of February 2026, their network provides access to:

- 6,052 Investors
- 6,406 Mentors
- 3,403 Corporate Connections

#### **Performance Snapshot (as of February 2026):**

Performance Snapshot (as of February 2026)

- 14 years of investment history
- 2,100+ companies supported.
- 14,000+ jobs were created.
- \$2.9B+ in cumulative funding raised

#### **Pilot Program: gALPHA**

The gALPHA pilot will serve as the initial testing ground under City oversight. By utilizing outsourced operators, we leverage repeatable processes and industry-standard KPIs to accelerate learning while minimizing initial capital risk.

- Why: Outsourced operators bring repeatable processes, established playbooks, and measurable KPIs. This enables benchmarking against industry standards and accelerates learning while minimizing risk.
- If the pilot demonstrates strong utilization and positive economics, the ECS can transition toward a hybrid or City-run model by gradually building internal capacity.

#### **Pilot Execution Plan**

- Scope: 5-week cohort operated by gener8tor, tailored to Amador County's entrepreneurial landscape.
- City Role: Oversight, local coordination, facilities, and stakeholder engagement.
- Core Activities:
  - Cohort recruitment
  - Curriculum delivery
  - Mentor network activation.
  - Local partner integration
  - Investor outreach
- Deliverables:
  - Cohort outcomes report
  - Recommended long-term operating model.
  - Transition plan (if applicable)

#### **Decision Criteria and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

- Utilization: Enrollment rate vs. baselines
- Retention & Outcomes: Cohort completion; number of startups advancing to the next stage.
- Economic Viability: Revenue per participant; cost per participant; break-even timeline
- Impact: Jobs created; follow-on investment; local supplier engagement
- Benchmarking: Comparison to accelerator industry standards to inform scale-up or sunset decisions

Following the initial cohort, selected startups will advance to Phase Two: "Planning and Execution." If the partnership is retained, this will transition into the gBETA program to provide continued support for emerging businesses.

## Financial Projections and Sustainability

We have developed a foundational budget based on traditional economic methods to launch and sustain the initial phases of the ECS. Our long-term objective is to integrate forward-looking strategies that provide the county with greater economic control and ensure sustainable growth for local businesses and the community. A final decision on whether the ECS will operate as a nonprofit or for-profit entity is pending the outcomes of the early validation Pilot. This Pilot is projected to occur in early 2027, after which we will conduct a detailed assessment of KPIs to determine our next steps.

The primary differentiator between the two proposed models lies in the scope and speed of growth. While a City-managed approach focuses on organic local development, partnering with gener8tor provides immediate access to an extensive national network of experts and significant funding resources. This established ecosystem can move companies to the next level far faster than the City could achieve independently in the short term. The Pilot results will ultimately reveal which path offers the most effective unit economics and strategic value for the region.

### SUMMARY TABLES

<b>with gener8tor</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>2029</b>		<b>w/o gener8tor</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>	<b>2029</b>
Members	6	70	130	190		Members	6	29	53	77
Revenue	\$600	\$28,650	\$66,300	\$98,000		Revenue	\$600	\$13,900	\$30,000	\$40,100
Expenses	\$79,892	\$258,010	\$476,920	\$495,520		Expenses	\$79,892	\$281,650	\$432,350	\$514,650
Grants	\$79,292	\$229,360	\$410,620	\$397,520		Grants	\$79,292	\$267,750	\$402,350	\$474,550
Gross Margin	-\$79,292	-\$229,360	-\$410,620	-\$397,520		Gross Margin	-\$79,292	-\$267,750	-\$402,350	-\$474,550
<i>Key value drivers are speed, capacity and network</i>						<i>Key value drivers is cost but slower, limited network</i>				
<i>Grants equal Gross Margin to achieve break even</i>						<i>Grants equal Gross Margin to achieve break even</i>				
<i>2026 includes 2025 spend for a total spend to date.</i>						<i>2026 includes 2025 spend for a total spend to date.</i>				

### DETAILED EXPENSE PRO-FORMAS

#### With gener8tor

EXPENSES	2026	2027	2028	2029	Program
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	
Operations					
gener8tor	\$ -	\$ 150,000	\$ 375,000	\$ 375,000	\$ 900,000
Office Supplies		\$ -		\$ -	\$ -
Travel	\$ 3,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 21,000
Research	\$ 5,754				\$ 5,754
	\$ -				
IT, Tools, Tech,	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Data, wi-fi, internet (ECS)	\$ -	\$ 4,250	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 10,250
Laptops	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Tools, software	\$ -	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,600	\$ 9,600
	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Marketing			\$ 600	\$ 900	\$ 1,500
Marketing Materials	\$ 300	\$ 600	\$ 1,200	\$ 900	\$ 3,000
Advertising	\$ 300	\$ 600	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	\$ 3,300
Paid Advertising; radio. print, Google.	\$ -				
Trade Shows	\$ -	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 9,000
			\$ -		
Events	\$ 9,774	\$ 4,800	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 26,574
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Preparation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Food	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -		\$ -		
Facilities	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Lease	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Utilities	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,000
Furniture and Equipment	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000
			\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Professional Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Consultants	\$ 44,737	\$ 30,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 116,737
					\$ -
Labor Cost	\$ 16,027	\$45,760	\$49,920	\$49,920	\$ 161,627
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$79,892</b>	<b>\$258,010</b>	<b>\$ 476,920</b>	<b>\$495,520</b>	<b>\$ 1,310,342</b>

W/O gener8tor

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2026 TOTAL</b>	<b>2027 TOTAL</b>	<b>2028 TOTAL</b>	<b>2029 TOTAL</b>	<b>Program TOTAL</b>
Operations					
Office Supplies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Travel	\$ 3,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 21,000
Research	\$ 5,754				\$ 5,754
	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
IT, Tools, Tech	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Data, wi-fi, internet (ECS	\$ -	\$ 4,250	\$ 17,750	\$ 4,250	\$ 26,250
Laptops	\$ -	\$ 5,200	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,200
Tools, software	\$ -	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,600	\$ 9,600
	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Marketing, sales			\$ 4,800	\$ 6,000	\$ 10,800
Marketing Materials	\$ 300	\$ 1,200	\$ 4,800	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,300
Advertising	\$ 300	\$ 1,200	\$ 4,800	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,300
Paid Advertising; radio. print, Google.	\$ -				
Trade Shows	\$ -	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 9,000
	\$ -		\$ -		
Events	\$ 9,774	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,774
Equipment	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Preparation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Food	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -		\$ -		
Facilities	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Lease	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Utilities	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,000
Furniture and Equipment	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 35,000
			\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Professional Services		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Consultants	\$ 44,737	\$ 51,000	\$ 108,000	\$ 51,000	\$ 254,737
Labor Cost	\$ 16,027	\$196,800	\$259,200	\$412,800	\$423,715
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$79,892</b>	<b>\$281,650</b>	<b>\$ 432,350</b>	<b>\$514,650</b>	<b>\$ 847,430</b>

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Current Demographics by County

#### Alpine County

Alpine County is the *least populous county in the state*, with about **1,200 residents**. Its demographics skew older, majority White and Native American, with high household incomes. The county's economy is dominated by **government, healthcare, tourism/recreation, and agriculture/forestry**, with ski resorts and outdoor recreation being major drivers.

#### Demographics

##### Population Metrics

- Population: ~1,200 (2020 Census)
- Density: ~2.3 people per square mile
- Median Age: 41.1 years
- 59% White
- 25% Native American (Washoe Tribe presence is significant)
- 15% Hispanic
- Very small percentages of other groups.

##### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$110,781
- Median household income: **\$110,781** (higher than California's \$96,334).
- Per capita income: **\$53,247**.
- Poverty Rate: ~12.3%
- GDP: ~\$128 million (2023)

#### Key Industries

Alpine County's economy is small but distinctive, shaped by geography and federal land ownership (96% of land is federally managed).

#### Major Employment Sectors

##### Major Employment Sectors

- **Healthcare & Social Assistance (11.6%)** – Local clinics and tribal health services.
- **Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (10.7%)** – Ski resorts (Bear Valley, Kirkwood), outdoor tourism, and cultural activities.

- **Administrative/Support Services (10.2%)** – Seasonal and service-related work.
- **Transportation & Construction (9–8%)** – Supporting infrastructure in a rural, mountainous area.
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (7.3%)** – Small-scale ranching, logging, and resource management.
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (6.5%)** – Consulting, environmental services, and specialized contractors.

#### Economic Context

- **Tourism & Recreation:** Ski resorts, hiking, fishing, and hot springs are central to Alpine’s economy.
- **Federal Land Management:** With three national forests (Eldorado, Stanislaus, Humboldt–Toiyabe), forestry and conservation jobs are significant.
- **Agriculture:** Limited but present, mostly ranching, and small-scale farming.
- **GDP:** About **\$128 million (2023)**, reflecting its small but service-oriented economy.

#### Amador County

Amador County has about **41,000 residents**, a **median age of 49.9** (older than the state average), and is **74% White with a Hispanic population of ~15%**. Its economy is anchored by **government, healthcare, retail, construction, education, and tourism (wine, casinos, outdoor recreation)**, with forestry and agriculture also contributing.

#### Demographics

##### Population Metrics

- Population: ~41,029 (2023)
- Density: ~69 people per square mile
- Median Age: 49.9 years
- 73.7% White (non-Hispanic)
- ~15.5% Hispanic (mixed categories)
- ~2% Black, ~1% Native American, ~1% Asian

##### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$81,526
- Poverty Rate: ~7.8%
- Median household income: **\$81,526**

- Per capita income: **\$42,602**
- GDP: ~\$1.92 billion (2022)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~7.8% (lower than California's 12%)
- **Commute:** Average 32.6 minutes, higher than state average

#### Key Industries

Amador County's economy blends **public sector employment, healthcare, retail, and tourism**, reflecting its rural character and cultural assets.

#### Major Employment Sectors

##### Major Employment Sectors

- **Healthcare & Social Assistance (11%)** – Sutter Amador Hospital, clinics, elder care.
- **Retail Trade (9.7%)** – Local shops, Walmart, Safeway, Raley's.
- **Education (9.4%)** – Amador Unified School District, local schools.
- **Construction (7.4%)** – Residential and infrastructure projects.
- **Hospitality & Entertainment (6.8%)** – Jackson Rancheria Casino Resort, Harrah's Northern California, wineries, restaurants.
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (6.5%)** – Consulting, engineering, specialized contractors.
- **Manufacturing & Forestry (6.5%)** – Sierra Pacific Industries, Timber Products Co.
- **Agriculture (2–3%)** – Vineyards, ranching, small-scale farming.

#### Major Employers

- Jackson Rancheria Casino Resort
- Harrah's Northern California Casino
- Mule Creek State Prison
- Sutter Amador Hospital
- Sierra Pacific Industries (lumber)
- Amador County Unified School District
- Volcano Communications Group (telecom)
- Walmart, Safeway, Raley's (retail)

## Economic Context

- **GDP:** ~\$1.92 billion (2022)
- **Sector Contributions:** 21% goods-producing, 54% service-providing, 25% government.
- **Labor Force:** ~14,500 workers, unemployment ~5.5% (2024).
- **Tourism:** Wineries (Amador is part of the Sierra Foothills AVA), casinos, historic towns (Sutter Creek, Jackson), and outdoor recreation drive seasonal employment.

## Calaveras County

Calaveras County has about **46,000 residents**, a **median age of 52** (older than the state average), and is **77% White with a growing Hispanic population (~14%)**. Its economy is driven by **healthcare, government, construction, retail, and tourism/recreation**, with agriculture and forestry also playing a role.

## Demographics

### Population Metrics

- Population: ~45,995 (2023)
- Density: ~45 people per square mile
- Median Age: 52 years
- 77% White (non-Hispanic)
- ~14% Hispanic (fastest-growing group)
- ~2% Asian, ~1% Black, ~1% Native American

### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$79,877
- Poverty Rate: ~13.4%
- Median household income: **\$79,877** (below California's \$96,334, but near U.S. average)
- Per capita income: **\$41,078**
- GDP: ~\$1.85 billion (2023)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~13.4% (slightly higher than state average of 12%)

## Key Industries

Calaveras County's economy reflects its rural character, tourism appeal, and service needs.

## Major Employment Sectors

## Major Employment Sectors

- **Government (11.5%)** – Local administration, schools, and state/federal agencies.
- **Construction (11.3%)** – Residential and infrastructure projects.
- **Retail Trade (8.5%)** – Local shops, services, and tourism-related retail.
- **Education (8.4%)** – Schools and educational services.
- **Manufacturing (6.8%)** – Small-scale, often tied to local resources.
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (6.0%)** – Consulting, engineering, and specialized services.
- **Hospitality & Entertainment (5.5%)** – Tourism, recreation, arts, and events (including the famous Calaveras County Fair & Jumping Frog Jubilee).
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (4.5%)** – Vineyards, ranching, timber.
- **Transportation & Warehousing (3.5%)** – Supporting rural logistics.

## Economic Context

- **Tourism:** Outdoor recreation, wineries, historic towns (Murphys, Angels Camp), and events drive seasonal employment.
- **Agriculture:** Vineyards and cattle ranching remain important, though not dominant.
- **GDP:** About **\$1.85 billion (2023)**.
- **Labor Market:** Commute times average 34 minutes, with many residents working outside the county.

## Inyo County

Inyo County has about **18,800 residents**, a **median age of 45.6**, and is **59% White, 24% Hispanic/Latino, and 8% Native American**. Its economy is shaped by **government, healthcare, tourism/recreation, agriculture/forestry, and retail**, with outdoor tourism (Death Valley, Mount Whitney, Eastern Sierra) playing a dominant role.

## Demographics

### Population Metrics

- Population: ~18,803 (2023)
- Density: ~1.9 people per square mile
- Median Age: 45.6 years
- 59% White (non-Hispanic)

- 24.8% Hispanic/Latino (fastest-growing group, up from 19% in 2010)
- 8.1% American Indian/Alaska Native (non-Hispanic)
- ~2–3% multiracial, Asian, or other groups

### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$72,432
- Poverty Rate: ~10.5%
- Median household income: **\$72,432**
- Per capita income: ~\$36,000
- GDP: ~\$1.42 billion (2023)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~10.5%.
- **Age Trends:** The **65+ population grew 30% between 2010–2022**, now making up nearly 25% of residents.

### Key Industries

Inyo County's economy reflects its **remote geography, federal land ownership (92% of land), and tourism appeal.**

### Major Employment Sectors

#### Major Employment Sectors

- **Government (13.1%)** – County administration, schools, and federal land management (BLM, National Park Service).
- **Retail Trade (12.7%)** – Local shops, tourism-related retail.
- **Hospitality & Entertainment (10.3%)** – Hotels, restaurants, outdoor recreation services.
- **Education (7.4%)** – Schools and training programs.
- **Construction (6.1%)** – Residential and infrastructure projects.
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (5.9%)** – Ranching, small-scale farming, resource management.
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (4.7%)** – Environmental consulting, engineering, specialized contractors.
- **Transportation & Warehousing (3.5%)** – Rural logistics and supply chains.

### Economic Context

- **Tourism:** Death Valley National Park, Mount Whitney, Eastern Sierra, and outdoor recreation (hiking, climbing, fishing) are central to the economy.

- **Federal Land Management:** 92% of land is federally owned, shaping employment and limiting private development.
- **Agriculture:** Limited but present—cattle ranching, alfalfa, and small-scale farming.
- **GDP:** ~\$1.42 billion (2023).
- **Labor Force:** ~8,500 employed, unemployment ~5–6%.

### Mariposa County

Mariposa County has about **17,000 residents**, a **median age of 51.6** (much older than the state average), and is **76% White with ~14% Hispanic**. Its economy is dominated by **government, healthcare, retail, education, and tourism/hospitality**, with Yosemite National Park as the central driver. Agriculture, forestry, and small-scale manufacturing also contribute.

### Demographics

#### Population Metrics

- Population: ~17,060 (2023)
- Density: ~11.8 people per square mile
- Median Age: 51.6 years
- 76% White (non-Hispanic)
- ~14% Hispanic (mixed categories)
- ~2% Native American
- ~2% Asian
- ~1% Black
- ~4% multiracial

#### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$65,378
- Poverty Rate: ~13.9%
- Median household income: **\$65,378** (below California's \$96,334)
- Per capita income: ~\$39,798
- GDP: ~\$1.1 billion (2023 estimate)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~13.9% (slightly higher than state average of 12%)
- **Commute:** Average 33.7 minutes

## Key Industries

Mariposa County's economy is shaped by its **proximity to Yosemite National Park**, rural character, and service needs.

## Major Employment Sectors

### Major Employment Sectors

- **Government (12.4%)** – County offices, schools, and federal land management
- **Retail Trade (11.3%)** – Local shops and tourism-related retail
- **Education (9.9%)** – Schools and training programs
- **Healthcare & Social Assistance (9.6%)** – Clinics, elder care, and rural health services
- **Administrative/Support Services (5.8%)** – Seasonal and service-related work
- **Construction (4.7%)** – Residential and infrastructure projects
- **Entertainment/Arts/Recreation (4.5%)** – Cultural and recreational activities
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (4.5%)** – Ranching, small-scale farming, and forestry
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (4.4%)** – Consulting, environmental services

## Major Employers

- Yosemite National Park concessions (Delaware North, Aramark, Tenaya Lodge, Majestic Yosemite Hotel)
- John C. Fremont Healthcare District (hospital and clinics)
- Mariposa County Unified School District
- Jackson Rancheria Casino Resort (regional employer, though outside county)
- Sierra National Forest & California Dept. of Forestry

## Economic Context

- **Tourism:** Yosemite National Park is the backbone of the local economy, drawing millions of visitors annually.
- **Agriculture:** Small-scale ranching, vineyards, and forestry.
- **Business Climate:** No business license requirement, supportive community, and rural charm attract entrepreneurs.
- **GDP:** ~\$1.1 billion (2023 estimate).

## Mono County

Mono County has about **13,000 residents**, a **median age of 40.3**, and is **66% White with ~27% Hispanic**. Its economy is dominated by **hospitality/tourism, government, healthcare, construction, and retail**, with Mammoth Lakes ski resort and outdoor recreation as the primary drivers.

### Demographics

#### Population Metrics

- Population: ~12,991 (2024)
- Density: ~4.3 people per square mile
- Median Age: 40.3 years
- 65.5% White (non-Hispanic)
- 26.7% Hispanic (various categories)
- ~2% Native American
- ~2% Asian
- ~4% multiracial

#### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$86,953
- Poverty Rate: ~11%
- Median household income: **\$86,953** (slightly below California's \$96,334)
- Per capita income: **\$49,271**
- GDP: ~\$1.31 billion (2022)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~11% (slightly below California's 12%)
- **Commute:** Average 17.5 minutes (shorter than state average of 29 minutes)

### Key Industries

Mono County's economy is shaped by its **tourism-heavy base**, federal land ownership, and small population.

### Major Employment Sectors

#### Major Employment Sectors

- **Government (10.4%)** – County administration, schools, and federal land management
- **Healthcare & Social Assistance (8.5%)** – Clinics and rural health services

- **Construction (7.9%)** – Residential and infrastructure projects
- **Retail Trade (7.8%)** – Local shops and tourism-related retail
- **Education (7.6%)** – Schools and training programs
- **Entertainment/Arts/Recreation (7.2%)** – Cultural and recreational activities
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (7.1%)** – Ranching, small-scale farming, and resource management
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (5.6%)** – Environmental consulting, engineering, specialized contractors

#### Economic Context

- **GDP:** ~\$1.31 billion (2022), with **GDP per capita ~\$99,232**, higher than state average
- **Sector Contributions:** 71.2% service-providing, 19.3% government, 9.5% goods-producing.
- **Labor Force:** ~9,057 workers, unemployment ~4.1% (2024)
- **Tourism:** Mammoth Lakes is the only incorporated town and the economic hub, with ski resorts, outdoor recreation, and seasonal tourism dominating.
- **Agriculture:** Limited but present—cattle ranching, alfalfa, and small-scale farming.

#### Tuolumne County

Tuolumne County has about **54,900 residents**, a **median age of 48.8** (older than the state average), and is **79% White with ~13% Hispanic**. Its economy is driven by **healthcare, government, construction, retail, education, and tourism/recreation**, with Sierra Nevada outdoor tourism and correctional institutions as major anchors.

#### Demographics

##### Population Metrics

- Population: ~54,873 (2023)
- Density: ~24.7 people per square mile
- Median Age: 48.8 years
- 78.6% White (non-Hispanic)
- ~13.2% Hispanic (fastest-growing group)
- ~2% Black, ~1% Native American, ~1% Asian

##### Economic Metrics

- Median Household Income: \$72,259

- Poverty Rate: ~10.7%
- Median household income: **\$72,259**
- Per capita income: **\$41,372**
- GDP: ~\$3.28 billion (2023)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~10.7% (lower than California's 12%)
- **Age Trends:** 65+ population grew from 20.6% in 2010 to 28.1% in 2022.

#### Key Industries

Tuolumne County's economy reflects its rural character, tourism appeal, and reliance on public sector employment.

#### Major Employment Sectors

##### Major Employment Sectors

- **Government (11.2%)** – County offices, schools, and correctional institutions.
- **Construction (9.4%)** – Residential and infrastructure projects.
- **Retail Trade (9.1%)** – Local shops and tourism-related retail.
- **Education (7.6%)** – Columbia College, school districts.
- **Hospitality & Entertainment (7.1%)** – Lodging, restaurants, recreation.
- **Professional/Scientific/Technical Services (6.8%)** – Consulting, engineering, specialized contractors.
- **Administrative/Support Services (6.3%)** – Seasonal and service-related work.
- **Manufacturing (4.9%)** – Small-scale, often tied to local resources.
- **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (4.5%)** – Ranching, timber, resource management.

#### Major Employers

- Adventist Health Sonora (hospital)
- Sierra Conservation Center (state prison)
- Columbia College (community college)
- Chicken Ranch Casino (tribal gaming)
- Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort (skiing)
- Sierra Pacific Industries (lumber)

- Hetch Hetchy Water & Power (utilities)
- Walmart, Safeway, Save Mart, Lowe's, Kohl's (retail)
- Tuolumne County Sheriff & Social Services (government)
- U.S. Forest Service (federal land management)

#### Economic Context

- **GDP:** ~\$3.28 billion (2023)
- **Sector Contributions:** Service-heavy, with healthcare, government, and tourism leading.
- **Tourism:** Yosemite gateway towns, Dodge Ridge ski area, and Sierra Nevada recreation are central.
- **Agriculture/Forestry:** Timber and ranching remain modest but historically important.

## Appendix 2 Circular Economy – Biomass Market

### Key Biomass Streams Relevant to Agriculture, Logging & Cattle

#### A. Agricultural Biomass

- Orchard pruning's, vineyard waste, nut shells, crop residues.
- Can be converted into **biochar, biogas, bio-oil**, and soil amendments.
- Help reduce groundwater contamination from fertilizers by improving soil carbon and nutrient retention.

#### B. Logging & Forest Residue

- Forest thinning, sawmill waste, dead trees, undergrowth.
- Critical for wildfire prevention and rural job creation.
- Forest waste is a major feedstock for **pyrolysis and biorefineries**.

#### C. Cattle & Livestock Biomass

- Manure is a major source of methane but also a **high-value circular input**.
- Livestock systems “upcycle” non-edible ag byproducts into food and produce manure that becomes fertilizer or biogas.  
Manure-to-energy systems (anaerobic digesters) are expanding across California dairies and cattle operations.

#### D. Water Treatment

- Limited and aging infrastructure
- Considerations - low-cost technology upgrades, better operations & monitoring, funding & capacity building,

### Types of Circular-Economy Companies Active in California

Below are the **main categories** of companies operating in this space.

#### 1. Biomass-to-Energy Companies

Convert agricultural and forest waste into:

- Biogas / Renewable Natural Gas (RNG)
- Bio-oil
- Biochar
- Electricity & heat

These companies often partner with:

- Logging contractors
- Cattle operations
- Almond, walnut, and vineyard growers

#### 2. Pyrolysis & Biochar Producers

- Use forest and agricultural residues to produce **biochar** for soil carbon storage and water retention.
- Biochar is highlighted as a major carbon-negative pathway in California.

#### 3. Anaerobic Digester & Manure-to-Energy Companies

- Works with cattle and dairy operations to convert manure into RNG.
- Support circular nutrient loops by returning digestate to fields as fertilizer.

#### 4. Biorefineries

- Convert mixed biomass (forest, ag, urban) into fuels and chemicals.
- Identified as a major opportunity for **rural economic development**.

#### 5. Circular Agriculture & Soil-Health Companies

- Focus on composting, nutrient recycling, and regenerative ag inputs.
- Often integrate livestock manure, crop residues, and biochar.

##### How These Industries Support Rural Communities

California research shows circular bioeconomy systems can:

- **Create new rural jobs** in biomass collection, processing, and transport.
- **Reduce wildfire risk** by monetizing forest waste.
- **Improve water quality** by reducing nitrate contamination from ag and livestock operations.
- **Increase farm and ranch profitability** through waste-to-value systems.
- **Support carbon-neutrality goals** by replacing fossil fuels with renewable biomass-based fuels.

#### Top Circular-Economy Champions in Central & Northern California

##### 1. State Government Leaders Driving Circular Policy

- **CalRecycle – Statewide Circular Economy Lead**
  - CalRecycle is California’s primary government driver of circular-economy policy, reuse systems, and waste-to-value initiatives. They explicitly champion the shift from a “disposable economy” to a circular one.

##### 2. Regional Circular-Economy Coalitions

BEAM Circular (Modesto / North San Joaquin Valley)

One of the strongest circular-bioeconomy organizations in California.

They work on:

- Orchard waste
- Nut shells
- Food waste
- Livestock manure
- Forest residues

They build public-private partnerships and help rural communities develop biomass-to-value industries.

This is the closest thing California has to a circular-bioeconomy accelerator.

##### 3. Who Champions Circular Principles in Rural Northern California?

###### Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)

- Supports forest-residue utilization, biomass facilities, and wildfire-risk reduction.
- Funds for rural circular-economy projects tied to forest health.
- Active in Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, and beyond

### **Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)**

- Represents 40 rural counties.
- Runs the **Golden State Natural Resources** project (GSNR) to convert forest biomass into pellets.
- Strong advocate for rural circular-economy and forest-residue utilization

### **UC Agriculture & Natural Resources (UC ANR)**

- Research and extension programs on manure-to-energy, biochar, composting, and regenerative ag.
- Works directly with farmers, ranchers, and rural counties

## **4. Businesses & Nonprofits Supporting Circular Biomass Systems**

### **Biochar & Pyrolysis Companies (Northern & Central CA)**

- Convert orchard waste, vineyard pruning's, and forest residues into biochar.
- Support soil carbon, water retention, and wildfire-fuel reduction  
Examples include:
- *Pacific Biochar* (North Coast)
- *Sonoma Biochar Initiative*

### **Manure-to-Energy / RNG Developers (Central Valley)**

- Works with dairies and cattle operations.
- Build digesters and nutrient-recycling systems  
Examples:
- *California Bioenergy (CalBio)*
- *Brightmark*
- *Aemetis Biogas* (Stanislaus/Merced)

### **Forest-Residue & Biomass Utilization Firms**

- Logging residue processors
- Small-scale biomass energy developers
- Wood-products innovators  
Examples:
- *GSNR (RCRC)*
- *North Fork Community Power* (Sierra foothills)
- *Mendocino Forest Products*

## **5. Who Are the Most Relevant for Amador / Sierra Foothills?**

### **1. Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC)**

Supports forest-biomass and rural circular-economy projects.

### **2. RCRC / GSNR**

Major forest-residue circular-economy initiative with strong foothill presence.

### **3. CalRecycle**

Statewide programs that fund rural circular infrastructure.

### **4. BEAM Circular**

Closest major circular-bioeconomy hub (North San Joaquin Valley).

### **5. UC ANR**

Local advisors for agriculture, cattle, and biomass reuse.