



Summary

The NSJV Translation Destination Framework

A Practical Strategy for Better Jobs, Stronger Industry, and Long-Term Stability





Why This Matters Now

The North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) has always been a region that makes and moves things.

From agriculture and food processing to manufacturing and logistics, our economy has served markets across California, the country, and the world.

But recent events, the COVID-19 pandemic, global supply chain disruptions, geopolitical tensions, and rapid technological change, revealed something important: long global supply chains are fragile. When they break, communities suffer.

Across the country, businesses and policymakers are rethinking where production happens. There is renewed interest in domestic manufacturing, supply-chain resilience, and regional production capacity.

For the NSJV, this creates a real opportunity.

We do not need to reinvent ourselves. We can build on what we already do well, like making, processing, assembling, and moving goods, and upgrading those strengths for the future.

The Translation Destination Framework is a strategy for doing exactly that.



What Is a “Translation Destination”?

In simple terms, translation means turning ideas into real-world production.

Many people think innovation follows a straight path:

Research → Development → Commercialization → Market

In reality, new products and services do not move straight from idea to success. Companies test their ideas, adjust designs once they begin making them, train workers to operate new equipment, work through permitting and regulatory steps, improve their processes, and gradually scale up production. Along the way, they learn valuable lessons from actually building and operating at scale. In other words, production itself helps refine and strengthen innovation.

The Translation Destination Framework recognizes that this back-and-forth process is normal, and that regions succeed when they make it easier.

The goal is not just to generate ideas. It is to reduce the obstacles that prevent good ideas from becoming real businesses, good jobs, and long-term production.



What Would This Mean for Region's Future?

If done well, this strategy would mean attracting higher-value manufacturing jobs, creating clearer pathways from local schools and colleges into stable careers, and gradually raising wages across the region. It would help strengthen local ownership and decision-making, rather than relying solely on outside firms with limited long-term commitment. At the same time, it would reduce the risk of the NSJV becoming only a warehouse and distribution corridor, where growth is concentrated in lower-margin activities. For a region whose economy has long been anchored in agriculture, an industry that has built deep expertise in logistics, processing, water management, and large-scale production, there is an opportunity to build on those strengths while also broadening the economic base. Although agriculture faces ongoing challenges related to drought, water constraints, price fluctuations, and global market dynamics, expanding a complementary production base would enhance long-term resilience and help stabilize the regional economy during downturns. In short, the goal is more stable, better-paying jobs rooted in long-term production and local capacity.

The NSJV's Built-In Advantages

The NSJV already has strong foundations to build on.

First, its location is a major advantage. The region sits at the center of California's key economic corridors, linking the Bay Area, Sacramento, the southern Central Valley, and the Sierra Nevada. With Interstate 5, Highway 99, major east-west routes, freight rail lines, the Port of Stockton, and access to major airports within one to two hours, the NSJV is one of the most connected production hubs in the state. Goods can move efficiently in every direction.

Second, the region has deep industrial experience.

For generations, local businesses have operated large-scale farms, food processing facilities, equipment manufacturers, warehouses, and distribution centers. The NSJV knows how to run complex operations at scale. Historically, the region has been strongest when it has kept more of the processing, innovation, and ownership local, not just the basic production work. That lesson is especially important today.

Third, higher-value innovation is already happening here.

Organizations like BEAM Circular are connecting research, workforce training, and businesses in the circular bioeconomy. Companies such as Parasol Elite Power, West Coast Magnetics, Cepheid, and Mid Valley Prototfab are producing advanced energy components, precision parts, medical diagnostics, and prototypes. These examples show that advanced manufacturing can succeed in the NSJV.¹ The next step is improving regional coordination so these kinds of successes become more common – and easier to grow.



What the Framework Does (and Does Not Do)

The Translation Destination Framework does not create a new government agency, attempt to replace coastal innovation hubs, or depend on a single large employer to transform the region. Instead, it offers a shared strategy to help local governments, schools and colleges, employers, and economic development organizations work better together. The goal is to better align workforce training, infrastructure investments, land use decisions, and industry support programs so they reinforce one another. A key focus is timing, specifically making sure that training programs, infrastructure improvements, and private investment happen in the right order and at the right moment, so opportunities are not missed and resources are not wasted.

Lessons from other regions

Other regions that have successfully strengthened and upgraded their economies tend to share several common traits. They commit to long-term coordination across institutions, build strong partnerships between employers and workforce training systems, invest in infrastructure that supports real production needs, and continuously learn and adapt as industries evolve. At the same time, their experiences highlight what to avoid: relying too heavily on a single company, competing internally across cities or counties, or building infrastructure without clear and realistic demand.² The overall lesson is straightforward – lasting economic success requires coordination, practical planning, and steady discipline over time.



What Needs to Happen Next

The next step is to turn the Framework into a clear and practical roadmap. That means identifying priority opportunities, clarifying what conditions need to be in place for success, sequencing investments in a logical order, and defining both short-term actions and long-term strategy. Achieving this will require sustained collaboration across counties, cities, educational institutions, employers, and community organizations. No single institution can do it alone; progress depends on working together over time.

The Opportunity Ahead

The NSJV does not need to compete directly with coastal research hubs. Instead, it can focus on what it already understands and does well: scalable production, systems integration, operational excellence, and turning ideas into real manufacturing. By better aligning workforce systems, infrastructure planning, and industry strategy, the region can strengthen supply-chain resilience, capture more value locally, and build a more stable economic future. The Translation Destination Framework is not a short-term initiative. It represents a long-term commitment to building durable production strength together.

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This briefing report has been prepared by the North Valley THRIVE Strategy Team. The statements, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and other data in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the North Valley THRIVE Program nor California Jobs First.

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¹For additional details on these NSJV examples see: <https://bit.ly/302z7xi>

²For additional details on the regional cases this section describes see: <https://bit.ly/4aDcQ1G>

For further details please see the Translation Destination Framework Report, available at: <https://bit.ly/46mEAFi>