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helping to move people and places out of poverty

JOBS-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT: THE NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH



Over the past decade, *jobs-centered development* has emerged as a promising alternative to the South's traditional strategies of economic and workforce development.

Following the Second World War, southern leaders waged an aggressive campaign to transform the regional economy. To this end, officials mixed public policies with private market forces to create jobs and cultivate a more skilled workforce. In doing so, they created a distinctive model of economic growth: a model based on luring industries south by offering a low-cost business climate, subsidizing key expenses, and providing customized workforce training.

Viewed in one light, this strategy has paid impressive dividends. In little more than six decades, the South has turned itself from a national economic laggard into a leader. Between 1980 and 2000, for instance, regional per capita personal income – an important yardstick of economic well-being – rose by 43 percent after adjusting for inflation. On an annualized basis, nine southern states recorded rates of per capita income growth at or above the national one.

Yet this prosperity largely has bypassed the South's low-income people and places. The region continues to trail the nation on vital measures of economic and social well-being and remains America's poorest section. In 2007, some 8.5 million Southerners – 15 percent of the region's population – had incomes below the federal poverty level; another 10.8 million individuals had incomes too high to be officially poor but too low to make ends meet.