

Inland Economic Growth and Opportunity

In the region of Riverside and San Bernardino counties

May, 2017

Overview

Private- and public-sector leaders from Riverside and San Bernardino counties have catalyzed an effort to forge a strategic agenda for advancing inclusive growth and opportunity that will benefit residents of both counties and put the region on the path to a more prosperous and secure future. This strategic agenda will endeavor to lift thousands out of poverty and broaden local access to opportunity by investing in better pathways to good jobs, improving educational outcomes, inspiring the region's brightest young people to stay, and strengthening civic infrastructure necessary to address emerging opportunities. The effort to shape this agenda will span one-year, beginning in June of 2017. It is led and informed by a diverse set of stakeholders and experts who represent the residents and institutions of both counties.

Background

The metropolitan region of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, also known as the "Inland Empire" or "Inland Southern California," has historically been a place where individuals and families have come to seek good jobs, establish better lives, and pursue more prosperous futures. The availability of undeveloped land, combined with a low cost of living compared to the rest of California, has led to decades of rapid growth.

However, the region is struggling to deliver growth that provides opportunities for working families to reach the middle class. The region's economy provides relatively few pathways to good jobs that provide stable, family-sustaining wages and economic security. Other social and environmental factors further confound access to opportunity and imperil the region's future prosperity. These challenges and the lingering impact of the Great Recession have fueled a narrative for the region as one beset by problems.

Yet this region also boasts many advantages that it can leverage to secure a more prosperous and inclusive future for its residents—if its leaders are intentional. Over the years, various city, county and regional agencies have created plans to leverage these advantages to benefit their immediate service areas. But there has never been a cohesive strategy to address shared challenges and advance inclusive growth and opportunity throughout the entire region.

Today, the region has reached a point in its evolution at which its leaders must together begin framing its future directions and develop a broadly shared, concrete strategy to realize this vision.

Recognizing this, leaders from the private and public sectors in Riverside and San Bernardino counties have come together in the last year to catalyze a concerted effort to develop a strategic agenda for advancing inclusive growth and opportunity. Local leaders have organized committees and a core team of professionals to oversee and execute this effort. These committees comprise a diverse set of stakeholders from the region's county and municipal governments, corporations and business groups, labor groups, civic and community enterprises, higher education institutions, philanthropy, the media, and other organizations. Additionally, experts and staff from the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program will provide research and technical support to inform and advise the effort.

Objectives

This effort aims to advance inclusive economic growth and expand middle class opportunity in the region of Riverside and San Bernardino counties by helping a diverse set of local leaders to create and implement a shared regional agenda of economic and workforce development strategies. This agenda will endeavor to lift thousands out of poverty and broaden local access to opportunity by investing in better pathways to good jobs, improving educational outcomes, inspiring the region's brightest young people to stay, and strengthening civic infrastructure necessary to address emerging opportunities.

Specifically, this effort will:

1. Produce new research and insights on challenges and opportunities to improve economic mobility and expand the middle class within the region
2. Translate insights on local economic and social challenges into strategies and tactics that aim to improve economic mobility and expand the middle class in the region
3. Establish a ready audience of regional leaders that will implement and continue to improve strategies and tactics that emerge to improve economic mobility and expand the middle class
4. Create greater local civic capacity for collective, bi-county action to successfully implement strategies that advance inclusive growth and opportunity
5. Over the long term, improve local quality of life through quality job creation and access, particularly in sectors that offer ample pathways to the middle class

This effort to promote inclusive economic development builds on and is informed by other regional, multi-sector initiatives focused on such issues as college and career readiness, water management, transportation, and improvements in public health. The effort also seeks to draw on existing and incipient local research and strategies as often as possible.

Timeline

This will be a one-year effort that formally begins in June of 2017 and culminates in the release of an agenda or plan by June of 2018. The yearlong effort will be organized under two distinct phases of work. The first phase of discovery will reveal insights about the region's opportunities to expand economic opportunity for its residents through research and community outreach. This phase will run from roughly June 2017 through September 2017. The second phase of strategy development will engage stakeholders in a process of designing strategies and initiatives that advance the region's stated goal and objectives for the project. This phase will also involve planning for implementation efforts to ensure that the agenda quickly gains traction and achieves real impact felt by the region's residents. The strategy phase will run from roughly October 2017 through May of 2018. The timeline and milestones in each phases may be reviewed and adjusted as necessary within the constraints of the project.

For more information, contact:

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