

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
BROOKINGS CAFETERIA: Advancing opportunity in California's Inland Empire  
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(MUSIC)

BROWN-HINDS: I was born in San Bernardino. And, I know my parents and my grandparents came to San Bernardino in the Inland Empire because they saw it as a place of opportunity. And, I see it not only as a place of opportunity but one of innovation and inclusion.

DEWS: Paulette Brown-Hinds is a local civic leader in California's Inland Empire, publisher of Black Voice News, and founder of the multimedia company Voice Media Ventures.

BROWN-HINDS: When I think of the founding of Riverside, the founder John W. North was an abolitionist who wanted to build a more inclusive community in places like Kaiser Permanente where my father worked for most of his career as the birthplace of this better-managed health care (inaudible), Montana. And, (inaudible) global leaders in technologies like GIS in Redlands, California. We have Esri there. So, I see it as a special place where anything is possible.

DEWS: You may not have heard of the Inland Empire, located to the east of Los Angeles, but it is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. Larger than many states, it sprawls across 52 cities, from Riverside to San Bernardino, Redland to Ontario, Temecula to Rancho Cucamonga. Its two counties stretch across 27,000 square miles and are home to 4.5 million people.

It includes Joshua Tree and Coachella and Palm Springs, mid-century modern homes and citrus groves, desert and snow, mountains and valleys. Its freeways with up to 16 lanes connect at West Orange County, Los Angeles, and San Diego, making it a magnet for new residents looking for a more affordable lifestyle, as the California coast has become more expensive.

It's a former agricultural, orange-growing region turned post-war military and light manufacturing hub, now grappling with its role in a modern economy, characterized by digitalization, automation, and global supply chains. It's also home to one of the fastest-growing, most diverse populations in the country, too many of whom struggle to reach the middle class.

BROWN-HINDS: Well, I'm seeing a challenge as someone who's been living in the Inland Empire

for my entire life, over 50 years. I've seen some of the great prosperity when we had Norton Air Base there, which is one of the reasons my grandfather moved to San Bernardino in the first place. We had nice middle-class jobs. We had opportunities for people who, with very little skill, could build a nice life for themselves, buy a home, raise their family.

And, I think in the recent years we had movement, places like the base shutting down and, you know, Kaiser's still leaving. There were fewer opportunities. And, then, although we have this huge growth, the types of jobs that replaced those that we lost were not those that could sustain families. So, it's harder for people who don't have as much education, as many skills, to create that kind of life where they could buy a home and help support their families.

DEWS: This is a special episode of the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Fred Dews.

I'll be joining this episode by Rachel Barker, a policy analyst and engagement strategist with the Metropolitan Policy Program, who conducted the interviews in this episode. You'll also hear from Marek Gootman, Brookings Fellow and Director of Strategic Partnerships and Global Initiatives, who leads Brookings work on the Inland Empire, as well as Senior Research Associate & Senior Project Manager, Chad Shearer, who, along with Isha Shah, pioneered novel analytics that made this work possible.

Finally, you'll hear directly from local leaders who have come together in unprecedented ways to define a new future for their region.

Growth. New jobs and development has been robust as the Inland Empire has recovered from the Great Recession. But, growth alone hasn't been enough to deliver broadly-shared prosperity. Al Arguello is also a local civic leader in the Inland Empire and market president for Bank of America.

ARGUELLO: The region has grown rapidly in the last several years, last couple of decades. One would think that the rapid growth in population and employment for a region is a positive trend, and it could very well be, but if it isn't accompanied by economic opportunities such as good jobs, stable

employment, and permanent affordable housing, it really can defeat resources and exacerbate the community's economic health.

So, as we are seeing now, too many individuals are living in the margins or are limited by their zip code and unable to create a better life for themselves and their families through good jobs and affordable housing.

DEWS: In recent decades, the manufacturing and military presence that fueled the region's prosperity has declined. Meanwhile, the growth of global trade with the Pacific Rim and new goods coming into the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have made the expansive, cheaper Inland Empire a natural staging point for the logistics industry. This has created lots of new jobs but not always jobs that support a middle-class lifestyle.

The region's real estate and retail-driven economy was also hard hit by the Great Recession, leaving swaths of newly-developed subdivisions and vacant, foreclosed homes. These challenges are emblematic of many cities in metro areas, but they're particularly acute in the Inland Empire, which is prompting local leaders to take action.

This spring, after 3 years of intensive collaboration with Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, local, public, private, and civic leaders launched an ambitious strategy to ensure that their region's future delivers on the middle-class dream that prompted so many to move to the Inland Empire in the first place. It's called the Inland Economic Growth and Opportunity Campaign.

Paulette Brown-Hinds and Al Arguello are its co-chairs. It includes a set of strategies and initiatives, driven by data and formed by work groups and committees assigned as stakeholders. But, what it's really about is how communities can better focus their economic and workforce development efforts to build both growth and inclusion.

It's the story of how, in the midst of disruptive global, economic, and geopolitical forces, cities and regions identify special industry strengths to grow more good jobs accessible to their residents. It's

the story of how local leaders, the elected officials, business executives, unions, higher education workforce boards, community leaders, and philanthropists living in these communities can set a vision and make a difference amid these forces. And, it's how a national think tank can apply its data and research to action in forming, coaching, motivating, and collaborating to close the gap between insights and reality.

Let's keep going with a more in-depth view of the Inland Empire region, it's challenges and opportunities and the new vision for its future. Here's Rachel with former Riverside, California mayor and long-time University of California, Riverside professor, Ron Loveridge. Loveridge initiated Brookings' collaboration with the region in 2016.

BARKER: The Inland Empire has changed a lot in recent decades, including experiencing some serious challenges to economic prosperity and opportunity, even in the midst of some fairly rapid growth. How would you characterize these challenges, and why is it important for the region to focus on building broader prosperity?

LOVERIDGE: There's a book that Michael Storper wrote, called *The Rise and Fall of Urban Economies*. He's essentially comparing and contrasting Los Angeles with San Francisco in terms of the regions and why San Francisco was more successful than Los Angeles, particularly measured in terms of per capita income.

And, his central conclusion, as I read it, was the importance of regional conversations in terms of economy and choices and what needs to be emphasized. And, so, that's what framed for me the importance of this look at the Inland Empire, although I tend to refer to it as the Inland Southern California's economic future.

BARKER: While you were in office as mayor of Riverside, the region in the broader country went through the Great Recession. Could you talk a little bit about how it affected the region and the people who live there?

LOVERIDGE: Well, there was this sort of major growth of housing, and much of that growth has no space at the coast, and so it took place in the Inland area. And, so, the Great Recession hit this area very hard. We spent a great deal of time asking where are we and where can we go and what can we do, and, again, trying to talk about beyond simply being a place where homes are built. How do you create a kind of quality in terms of place? How do you create a kind of economy where jobs can be here rather than on the coast or in San Diego?

BARKER: And, so, your instigation, local leaders from the Inland Empire, collaborated with Brookings for several years to build broader prosperity. What prompted you to initiate that work?

LOVERIDGE: Well, if you ask what is our vision of who we are and what's our narrative, we're trying to define that. Essentially, we're talking to ourselves. One of the things you'll learn in elected office, there are a lot of sort of best practices, not only for cities but also for regions. And, so, if we look to what future for the Inland area, it seemed to me it was incumbent to ask the question -- how does this region define itself, support itself, talk to itself?

For our region, this is a first of a kind of getting a kind of conversation across different sectors and trying to ask who are we and what's our future, what choices do we have, what resources do we have, how can we do something better? It also reminds people that there are some extraordinary things about this region that is not a region of difficulty. It's a region of opportunity and promise.

DEWS: The question of how cities and regions define themselves in the modern economy isn't unique to the Inland Empire. Even in an expanding economy and in the midst of speculation over full employment, many communities and people are struggling. The nation has added over 19 million jobs during the recovery from the recession, an increase of over 19 percent since the start of the recovery.

However, middle-class earnings have only increased by 3 percent over the same period. These trends have fueled Brookings work with cities around the country to expand the definition of economic success beyond simply growth, and to empower local leaders with data, frameworks, and tools to build

more sustainable, inclusive economies. Here's Rachel speaking with Marek Gootman and Chad Shearer who, along with Isha Shah, authored a report, *Advancing Opportunity in California's Inland Empire*, examining the region's economic performance.

BARKER: So, we've all spent a lot of time over the past few years helping cities and regions elevate their ambitions for economic development and what they can do to build both more competitive and more inclusive economies in the midst of these disruptive forces. What do city leaders need to do differently to succeed today?

GOOTMAN: The first thing we need to do is adjust the mindset of economic development leaders and elected leaders in regions to think more broadly about what economic success means. Historically, that is focused simply upon growth -- how many jobs are being created, often forced to be counted on a monthly or weekly basis.

These economic developers have been held accountable for that simple measure of job creation. It's easy to understand. You can cut a ribbon, you can dig a hole, you can count a number of jobs from -- at a business that's opening or attracted to your area. But, that's not enough for economic success.

You also have to take into account two other important factors. One is prosperity. It's productivity. It's growth of firms. It's their ability to be sustainable in the economy over the long term and continue to produce quality jobs. The other is inclusion -- who's benefiting from these jobs, are they able to succeed in the economy, in providing what their families need, achieving a middle-income lifestyle?

So, all three elements of growth, prosperity, and inclusion need to be taken into account, and strategies need to work toward those as three goals for economic success.

DEWS: Here's Chad explaining how this framework is relevant in looking at the Inland Empire.

SHEARER: So, what's interesting about the Inland Empire is its growth, its incredible growth from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s, up until the beginning of the Great Recession. And, really even today, its job growth continues to be among the fastest of any metropolitan area in the country.

Where this region has struggled is around prosperity and inclusion. Its logistics sector has been a source of really remarkable strength for this economy. We've seen a lot of new firms entering there, multinational firms coming in and opening new facilities to move their goods from the ports and into the interior United States.

We've seen Amazon come in so that I can distribute goods throughout Southern California. All of that has created an incredible number of jobs, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and that has made this region the envy of many others across the United States.

But, the problem is that logistics is not the highest value-added industry in the country, and others that are, say, manufacturing, have been struggling in this region for quite a while. California is not always the easiest place to run a manufacturing facility, and that, along with the decline of the defense industry throughout Southern California, but especially in the Inland Empire, has really taken a toll on the region's overall productivity.

And, what it's been left with are its kind of lower value-added sectors, including not only logistics but also sectors like retail and hospitality and health care, which largely serve local markets and don't do trade with other regions. So, that's one challenge for this region.

Another one around inclusion is that many of the jobs in these less productive sectors just don't pay all that great. If you don't have a whole lot of productivity, then it's hard to pay your workers really well. As a result of that, this region has among the lowest median wages, the lowest average wages of any large region in the country, certainly any region close to its size, and despite the massive number of jobs it adds every year. It continues to struggle from a low employment rate.

So, these are all big challenges for this region, and we certainly hope that the research that our advancing opportunity report presents can help leaders here begin to address these in some very coherent and reinforcing, strategic ways.

MR. DEWS: The challenges around job quality in the Inland Empire in particular provide an



opportunity for Brookings to test new research led by Chad called Opportunity Industries. This work is focused on identifying how local leaders can support the growth of industries and jobs, along with stronger workforce pathways that provide better opportunity for local workers, including those without a bachelor's degree.

BARKER: Chad, you've spent nearly 3 years developing the detailed methodology and findings underlying this Opportunity Industries work. Could you walk us through what it explores, why it's important, and what inspired you to take this on?

SHEARER: So, Opportunity Industries began as a project looking at job quality and economic mobility in the United States, and what motivated it was the shape of the economic recovery from the Great Recession. In the years immediately following the recession, the big concern in the United and in most metropolitan areas was around job growth.

But, as job growth in the labor market recovered, what really became more pressing was a lack of job quality in many of the jobs that the United States was growing in the aftermath of the recession. Many of these jobs had lower wages, there were not the same kinds of benefits being offered, and many people were earning a lot less than they had prior to the recession. And, so, the concern was that the jobs are back but many people are still worse off.

Meanwhile, there were these growing concerns, and these concerns continued to be pressing around the future of job quality in the United States in metropolitan areas because of the threat of automation and changing technologies in the labor market that could displace a lot of workers that have good jobs today.

So, with all of this in mind, we wanted to then explore what kinds of industries offer good jobs that provide a middle-class wage and benefits that can support a family and also what kinds of industries provide jobs that can get people there to those jobs. You know, not everybody enters the labor market and immediately has a good job. Some people need time in the labor market to acquire knowledge, experience,

skills, abilities in order to compete for a good job. And, we wanted to identify those, too.

And, so, that's what led us to this Opportunity Industries work which identifies those industries that concentrate those jobs, jobs that are good today, as well as promising jobs which provide pathways to good jobs in the future.

BARKER: And, at a time when we hear a lot about inclusive growth and shared prosperity in cities, what unique lens does this analysis add to the conversation?

SHEARER: So, it provides a lot of research and information that local policymakers can use to shift the orientation of their economic development and workforce development strategies. Economic development has always been obsessed with industries, and for good reason. Industries need different things to grow.

Some industries need to be close to lots of universities, where smart people are coming up with the best ideas. Other industries need to be located next to their suppliers. And, still other industries need to be located close to consumers. And, so, economic development has always kind of had this industrial lens that acknowledges that different industries need different things.

What we wanted to add to that conversation, though, was this prism of job quality -- which industries provide lots of good or promising jobs for what types of individuals? And, so, we've given these policymakers, economic developers, and their corollaries and workforce development organizations this new information to kind of understand and judge which industries are going to be better for which types of people, from a kind of materialistic or from a job-quality perspective.

BARKER: So, while working on this analysis at a national level, you also have spent significant time digging into these trends in dynamics, in the Inland Empire specifically. What did that reveal?

SHEARER: The Inland Empire was a really attractive place to do this work, because, one, there were leaders there that were poised to dig into this kind of research, but, two, because the dynamics of that place -- we're talking about a region that is rather poor. It's been growing really fast, but it is not a

prosperous place, by many measures.

And, so, there's a lot of momentum there behind the economy and its growth, but momentum that's not pushing in a direction that's good for more people. And, so, we thought this was an ideal place to kind of pilot this analysis and work with those local leaders who are very keen to put together new strategies and policies that would help more people.

BARKER: What were some of the really interesting or compelling findings that you uncovered as you dug into all of that data?

SHEARER: So, what's really interesting about what we found in the Inland Empire is that this is a region that actually has a lot of good job and a lot of promising jobs for sub-baccalaureate workers. The challenge that we found there is that, despite the large number of good and promising jobs in the region, there aren't nearly enough for all of the struggling workers who need them.

This is a region where quite considerable number of workers, people and families, struggle to make ends meet each month. And, many, many of them would need to get good jobs in order to get this region to a level of prosperity that's similar to the rest of the national economy.

At the same time, despite this deficit, we also have found that there's a lot of promise here, that the region does a lot of economic momentum behind it and has a lot of very earnest and committed leaders and that those leaders have strategies available to them that could really start to move the dial on job quality in the region.

DEWS: What could these strategies for supporting good and promising jobs look like? In April, the Inland Empire Economic Growth and Opportunity Campaign released a report outlining how it plans to grow these middle-class jobs, applying Brookings' findings to action. Here's Marek and Rachel talking about what led up to that.

BARKER: You spent 3 years taking Brookings' data and research to ground and working with local leaders to build the civic capacity and lay the groundwork for this action they're taking now. What did that

process look like and what did you learn?

GOOTMAN: As we've increasingly explored problem-solving with city regions across the country, we've established a pretty standard approach, bridging research into practical application and impact. It involves organizing these diverse groups of stakeholders, undertaking market diagnostics or assessments using the research but grounded with local researchers as well to ensure that capacity is built up locally and that our national-level analysis is enhanced and reaffirmed by local understanding, and then taking all of those actors through a process of strategy, goal-setting, tactic development, and operational design for implementation, getting commitments from the various interests to taking on ownership of those tactics, and finally, figuring out how to measure whether you were successful or not.

BARKER: The Inland Empire strategy, building off your report in collaboration with the region, outlines several ambitious efforts to strengthen both existing industries, like logistics and manufacturing, and support new ones, like cyber security. Why are these significant?

GOOTMAN: What we uncovered through the Opportunity Industries analysis and its application to the Inland Empire was there were three areas where you could intervene toward more inclusive economic development and opportunity. The first is looking at your existing sectors, the really big job generators, and determining whether you could improve the quality of jobs in those core industries, those foundational industries.

In the Inland Empire, advanced manufacturing still has a significant presence, logistics obviously an enormous presence. So, the question was, how can we move those kinds of firms up the value chain or those sectors, how we could move those sectors up the value chain in order to generate higher-quality jobs over the long term and how we could benefit, also, incumbent workers in those sectors to respond to issues of digitalization and automation over the next period of years.

Second, we were able to identify emerging industries, emerging sectors where there was likely greater opportunity in good and promising job creation. That helps economic developers and other

policymakers to focus their investments and efforts on the kinds of sectors that are going to create quality jobs we want to see versus looking more toward locally-serving sectors or those that are not generating jobs that provide that middle-skill, middle-income opportunity.

GOOTMAN: The third area the Opportunity Industries analysis revealed through the Inland Empire project was how demographics played out in the individual sectors, so that could determine, whether by gender or race, people were underrepresented in sectors where there was great opportunity and how you might be able to target those underrepresented populations through workforce interventions, through outreach, in order to make certain that they were able to take advantage of these opportunity industries. So, it had implications for training and community colleges and the people or institutions, like faith-based organizations, that connect those individuals to those promising and good jobs.

DEWS: So, how have local leaders started applying these insights and how might the Inland Empire look differently as a result? Let's go back to the region and learn more. Here's Rachel speaking with Paul Granillo, President and CEO of the Inland Empire Economic Partnership.

BARKER: A real cornerstone of IEGO is expanding growth and opportunity by strengthening and upgrading both existing industries and then also supporting the emergence of new industries like cyber security. I want to talk about logistics in particular, because that's an industry that's getting more and more attention on a national stage with e-commerce retailers like Amazon.

Logistics has a long history and legacy in the region. Can you start off by telling me how it emerged as a cornerstone of the region's economic strategy?

GRANILLO: So, I think you have to look at the price of land. And, as Orange County and Los Angeles County started to be built out and as the logistics center advanced and the need for larger and larger buildings started to rise to the top, then there was an actual match in the Inland Empire where we had land in which to build these facilities which was also attached to two Class I railroads, which is also attached to the interstate highway system going East, West, and North-South. Geographically, it was well-positioned.

Now, nobody, even I think 20 years ago, even 10 years ago, could really forecast the growth of e-commerce and how we as consumers have radically changed the way in which we are purchasing goods. And, so, with the rise of fulfillment, the need for facilities to be created in order for us to get what we want, which is our goods delivered to our homes as quickly as today, well, the infrastructure to support that had to be created.

And, if you look at regions around the world, what exists in the Inland Empire is really cutting edge for its size and for the impact that it has internationally, nationally, and for the state of California.

BARKER: And, logistics hasn't always supported the highest quality or the best-paying jobs. There's also significant potential for change in the logistics industry with automation. What is your vision and the region's vision for the potential of logistics in the region and for it to evolve into an industry that really supports growth and opportunity?

GRANILLO: So, I think that we have an opportunity to pause. We have an opportunity to partner with the logistics industry which is also part of the wholesale goods industry and partner with our education partners and look at what jobs are going to need to be created in order to support the logistics industry moving forward.

So, what do I mean there? Automation. There is going to be the care and feeding of automated systems. The drones will come. And, we have the opportunity to be leading in the testing in the United States on drone delivery. We have to look at the systems within the warehouses.

Our need as consumers for, again, having our goods as quickly as possible means that there's going to be new models of fulfillment, maybe a smaller footprint or a multistory closer to the inner urban core in order for goods to be delivered. All of that's going to require research. All of that's going to require partnerships.

And, I think that the Brookings' recommendation that says the logistics industry in the Inland Empire is so big, right, that it gives us a competitive advantage if we're doing the hard work of looking at the

future, of doing the research, of creating strong partnerships between business and academia and government in order to make sure that regions like ours that are very susceptible to the loss of jobs in the future, that that isn't going to be the case.

Because, we saw that there was a potential threat and we have started the conversation about how we're going to turn that threat into a competitive advantage.

DEWS: A big part of strengthening the region's advantage in logistics is launching a university, an industry-led center of excellence. The center will help the region move up the value chain, upscale existing jobs, advance innovation in the industry, and leverage its presence into complementary sectors.

Janice Rutherford is a local supervisor in San Bernardino County. Her district includes over 400,000 residents, spanning Rancho Cucamonga into the San Bernardino National Forest. Here she is speaking with Rachel.

BARKER: What would that evolution in logistics look like and what will it require to succeed?

RUTHERFORD: It certainly requires us to improve our quality and completion of basic education. It requires our folks to be willing to learn more about robotics and automation, and it requires an understanding that we're not going to be as concerned about moving the boxes and the trucks as we are about the machines and the artificial intelligence that figures out how those boxes and trucks move.

It's really going to require a collaboration with higher education and industry with our hardworking people to dream those dreams and to test them out here. And, we've got eh facilities and the people who are willing to do that. We have to create a center for excellence in those areas that brings together the best and the brightest and lets us be the world's workshop for how we do this better and smarter.

BARKER: You've mentioned this new vision for logistics with modernized warehouses and new jobs and new types of jobs. Could you talk a little more of just what that vision is and what you think that could look like in the region, maybe, 10 years from now if this really succeeds?

RUTHERFORD: Ten years from now, what I hope to see is that we have more people employed in

companies or creating companies that make the robotics and automation and artificial intelligence that run logistics, warehouses, and the logistical transport services. We need to not just be providing the personnel who work in those warehouses and who drive the trucks.

We need to have the people who create the software that's going to make that truck autonomous. We need to have the people who service the robots that actually pull packages from shelves and ship them out the doors of warehouses. We need to be that technological center rather than just the warehouse center.

DEWS: In addition to upgrading these foundational industries, like logistics and manufacturing, the Inland Empire is also focused on tying together regional assets to accelerate newer emerging industries that tend to generate a greater number of promising jobs. One of those is around environmental technologies and green jobs, building on a recent announcement that the California Air Resources Board will move its research headquarters to the region. Another is cyber security. Here's Rachel speaking with Brian Hawley, a local cyber security executive who co-chaired the emerging industries task force for the regional effort.

BARKER: Cyber security is obviously such an important, emerging industry today with the proliferation of hacking and the cloud and all that is digital in our economy and in our lives today. What kind of opportunity do you think that the Inland Empire has in establishing a real foothold in that industry?

HAWLEY: Oh, I think the opportunities are significant. You know, there's a couple of parts to cyber security. There's the part of cyber security that's more implementation or focused on operations, making sure you have the right configuration on your switches, making sure you have the right tools and you're doing penetration analysis and those sorts of things.

And, then, there's also the other side of that which is more of a research side of that, where you're trying to identify the new ways that people could be attacking and ways to prevent that. And, that type of research is going on here at some of these institutions, some of the research institutions in the region. So, you really have kind of both halves of that equation and a talent pool to draw from for both halves of that



cyber security equation. So, I think there's tremendous opportunity in that particular area.

DEWS: Developing these ambitious strategies involved government, business, workforce, higher-ed, philanthropy, and other civic leaders from across the region's two enormous counties, Riverside and San Bernardino, coming together in new ways. This kind of cross sectoral civic collaboration and united focus is crucial to building inclusive growth. Here's Rachel, again, with Brian Hawley.

BARKER: Why, as a business leader, is it important for the region to build broader prosperity, and what do you think is going to happen if the region doesn't act?

HAWLEY: Yeah, as a region, we really have to be more diversified economically. The challenges that we had during the recession were primarily because we were focused or limited in the sectors that our economy was based on. And, with that kind of a diversified economy, we can't handle those downturns as well, and obviously that has impacts for the entire community in the region.

BARKER: We have done a lot of work here at Brookings over the past couple years on inclusive economic development and developing a business case for inclusive growth. What do you think is the business case for engaging on these issues and expanding opportunity in the Inland Empire?

HAWLEY: Well, I think it's pretty straightforward. A stable region provides stability for the businesses and the employees that reside in the region. It also provides a stable tax and economic base. So, it's kind of a no-brainer. You really want inclusive growth, inclusive economic development, and a diversified economic platform.

BARKER: A big focus for a lot of firms obviously is workforce and having access to a skilled talent base. How are you thinking about that in relation to these inclusive growth issues?

HAWLEY: Yes, absolutely. I mean, one of the real assets that we have in this region is, within probably a 30-mile radius we have five institutions that are either public or nonprofit of higher learning. We've got a couple of community colleges. We've got UC. We've got a Cal State. We've got a couple of nonprofit universities. And, those all have variety of programs. In many cases, there's also some

entrepreneurship programs with those. So, having that kind of talent to draw from is a very valuable resource.

DEWS: Cross-sectoral partnerships are particularly significant for ensuring that more of the Inland Empire's residents are prepared to access new and better jobs in the region. Here's Janice Rutherford again.

RUTHERFORD: We have grown incredibly in recent years, but that growth has not been equally spread across our population, in part because of our disparate educational attainment levels. We do have folks who have been born and raised here and go to college and come back here or go to our many universities that are in the area, and we have a lot of those.

But, we're finding a really large percentage of our population that doesn't even get beyond high school. And, that is not the making for success in the modern economy. It's only been in recent years that we've really embraced the idea that beyond high school doesn't have to mean a university degree but can include a level of technical education and focus on soft skills that our high schools don't seem to be providing anymore.

So, we have worked really hard to create partnerships with businesses, our K-12 schools, community colleges, to come up with unique programs that really offer training with long-term career opportunities and career ladders to folks who aren't that interested in an academic education beyond high school.

BARKER: And, within your district, employers have collaborated with university officials in a really interesting way to launch a new industrial technical learning center which is called InTech. Could you talk a little about that and why it's so promising?

RUTHERFORD: InTech has been fabulously successful, taking folks -- a lot of mid-career changers who have lost previous jobs and who need the skills of the modern economy in a very technical way -- and they get to go to this center. They get community college credit. We have instructors from industry. And, when they walk out of there they are ready for a job at one of the industries that sponsors InTech.

It has really helped people realize their dreams and shows us what's possible when we stop thinking of education as something that happens between the ages of 5 to 22 in a classroom at a remote campus.

BARKER: And, what is the experience like for someone to go through the center in this program? What kinds of resources do they get access to?

RUTHERFORD: I think the biggest resource they get access to is the encouragement and the support that they can do something they'd never imagining doing in their life. I know a female friend of mine, her kids were in high school, her husband had passed, and she never imagined herself working with electronic equipment. To see her confidence just soar because of the time the instructors and the fellow students took with her, because of the social supports she had from the school, was really inspiring.

DEWS: The mission to build inclusive growth, strengthen industries, and improve opportunity for workers has also brought together other groups. Here's Paul Granillo, again, with Rachel.

BARKER: Two groups that are often on different sides of the table in these situations are business and labor. How have you thought about bringing those two sides together in the context of these issues?

GRANILLO: Yeah, that's an incredibly important piece of the puzzle. And, labor and business have more in common than separates them. Certainly, perspectives can be different and self-interests can be different. But, if we both believe that having employees that are well-trained and proficient is the goal, then I think there are opportunities to work together.

And, even in the dialogue, self-interest, it shows, right? And, if you're really trying to get to an end that's positive, well, then, if you're only coming at it from self-interest and not for the good of the whole, those people and those opinions, they tend to be pushed to the side, because the ultimate goal is always going to be bigger than one person and whatever they're trying to get on their own behalf.

DEWS: As the Inland Economic Growth and Opportunity Campaign moves to action, the Inland Southern California Community Foundation is incubating implementation. Michelle Decker is the

organization's president and CEO. She moved to the Inland Empire last year after spending several decades working in community development in Baltimore, Maryland and Appalachian, Ohio. Here she is speaking with Rachel.

BARKER: In Inland Empire, the community foundation has taken on responsibility for incubating the IEGO campaign. Now that it's moving towards action and implementation, why did this make sense and what does that look like for the foundation to really take on this role?

DECKER: We're going to help build up the backbone infrastructure for IEGO. So, the community foundation has the ability to play a role that will bring people together but for whom our goal or our mission is really about just the larger betterment of the region. Community foundations are doing this increasingly. And, I think everybody in philanthropy is smart these days, that you're not going to write a grant or ship off a check to solve some of the bigger structural problems, and it would be better for us, rather than writing a check to solve homelessness, that we had an economy that could do it and a tax base that could do it.

And, so, I think philanthropy now sees that it's got to get into leadership and advocacy and bigger systems thinking, to be able to show up at philanthropy and do what we can, because we still need to support early-childhood education and after-school programs and pet shelters and a lot of conventional, maybe, community-based, nonprofit work. But, we're all going to do better if the region's economy is inclusive and ahead of the curve on the changes that are coming down in the U.S.

DEWS: Michelle and Rachel also talked about the civic collaboration built around the Inland Economic Growth and Opportunity Campaign and the importance of its sustainability.

BARKER: You're kind of speaking to the value of the range of stakeholders that came together in this work, a cross-sector, so business, government, university, philanthropy across these two large counties in the region. How significant is that collaboration to the region's success, and what will be required to sustain that as you move forward into action?

DECKER: It's essential for our success. Social capital, the trust, the norms of behavior that we have

between sectors and between institutions and organizations really are the firmament for getting something done. And, all of us who've been through planning processes and been in meetings and seen efforts succeed and seen efforts fail over the decades know that that's pretty fundamental.

So, fostering it, identifying when it's working, identifying when those relationships and norms perhaps aren't working, and seeing the conversations and seeing the building of trust and collaboration as very much a long-haul effort is important. So, to sustain it -- and what's important to sustain it, would be a commitment that is long term.

And, I could pull a number out. I could say 10 years, 20 years. But, if we really think this is the way we need to work, there's sort of never a point where we're done. It's staying ahead of the evolution and staying ahead of the change. So, we talk about, oh, it's -- technology is changing everything that we do. Yeah, it is, and it's going to continue. But, we still have these fundamentals in our human relationships and ways that we work together that we need to sustain and even get better at.

BARKER: When you've been at these tables in the region, what do you think is kind of the unique lens or perspective that you can bring as philanthropy versus these other actors that are at the table?

DECKER: When you are working on the ground in an organization around an issue, you have to make budget, and the strategies that you've built are important and they need to be sustained. And, so, let's say you want to bring people together and everybody wants to solve a homelessness issue. Well, all of those organizations are invested in who they are and what they do and how they resource what they do.

So, the ability of community philanthropy to bring people to the table and to convene folks to have these discussions, it really is -- literally the benefit is that we are not an economic development organization or an entity within county government for whom certain ways of doing things just has been sustained over the years, or that can't really be challenged politically without some safety and some neutrality at the table, where people can all kind of hash it out and think it through.

So, philanthropy's ability to just show up and say what's important to you and how do we support

you is absolutely golden. And, I say this because for 27 years I was running community-based organizations in both Baltimore and Appalachian, Ohio and did it with terrific collaboration, in water quality and housing and commercial revitalization and food systems, all amazing.

But, I know that we had limitations as that entity that was implementing the work. And, so, folks can rely on a good community foundation like the community foundation serving Riverside and San Bernardino counties to step in and kind of see everybody as valid but also raise the tough questions and to help us all kind of focus on the larger goals. I've seen it as a kind of amazing force.

BARKER: You've talked about how the Inland Empire was a really interesting kind of different context to go work in the context of your career in community development. It's obviously at the vanguard or the frontier of some macro trends that we look at here at Brookings in terms of demographic change, in terms of the nature of job quality, in terms of technological change and how automation is changing the economy.

What lessons do you hope that other cities and regions can take away from this experience in the Inland Empire being at the front of these dynamics, and how do you hope the region might become a model for other places?

DECKER: Well, we talk about this region, and it's so important to remember that it is 27,000 square miles, that it is sort of middle of the pack if you had to make us a state, and there are probably 24 other states below us who are smaller. And, so, I think that we can be a model in terms of our size and our scale in how we work within that size and scale, 4-1/2 million people, and collaborate to solve issues that are affecting 4-1/2 million people and all of the companies and all the municipalities and K-12 kids that are within that region.

I think the racial diversity and inclusion is just crucial, and it has everything to do with fairness, with equity, but also with moving leadership into the right places and building on the assets that you have, and it's always going to come down to the people that are here. And, so, for the rest of the country, when we

live in a lot of sound bites around race and a lot of confusion as a nation around race, we are so strong. Our diversity is our strength, and the more that we can lean into that and lift that up, the better off this country is going to be.

So, I'm just immensely proud to be here and to be working with so many different kinds of people who all have their sights on what does an inclusive economy look like.

DEWS: Here's Marek, again, with what Brookings sees emerging as a result of the region's new collaboration and why that is so important.

BARKER: So, as local leaders now shift to action, what are you hoping to see?

GOOTMAN: One of the best outcomes we've seen from this process has been the different interests, different stakeholders coming together, sitting down at a table with labor representatives and business representatives. And, the logistics industry is one example -- individual business owners and entrepreneurs participating in this and taking leadership roles around different tactical strategies in the sectors, empowering the business leadership organizations, the community foundation, thinking of philanthropy's role, the community foundation taking on the incubator function for a distributed implementation model to execute on these strategies and tactics as a neutral resourced organization that could be the backbone for a collective impact.

These processed things don't sound like a lot, but in a region as diverse and large as this one, to have those new investors and stakeholders come together on a shared agenda that focuses on this kind of quality job creation and access for residents is really significant. And, if you talk to people who've been involved in the process, I think you'll find that they're inspired by what has come out of this really long effort and what was generated by evidence and translated into action.

DEWS: And, what is the potential of this action for the region and its residents? Here's former Riverside mayor, Ron Loveridge.

LOVERIDGE: The key concept that I've had as an elected official is that somebody said, well, what

are you going to do about your future? And, the question is, do you need to invent your future? What IEGO does in terms of an agenda and focus is it points to a way that we can invent the future of this region. Otherwise, you're just a victim of circumstances and trends.

DEWS: You can find the report by Chad Shearer, Isha Shah, and Marek Gootman, *Advancing Opportunity in California's Inland Empire*, on our website at [Brookings.edu/metro](https://www.brookings.edu/metro).

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