

The Regional Civic Movement in California

BY NICHOLAS P. BOLLMAN

California has been under the national microscope over the past year, first with the largest state budget deficit in the history of the nation (\$38 billion) and then with the first successful gubernatorial recall campaign in California's history (Gov. Gray Davis was ousted last November, just a year after he had been reelected to his second term), along with the election of celebrity-superstar Arnold Schwarzenegger as a self-declared "citizen governor." Most Americans believe deeply (as do most Californians) that California has been governed badly in recent years, and most are skeptical that it can pull itself out of trouble.

California has many, many obstacles to establishing effective governance:

- Term limits for state legislators, which has depleted legislative experience (and institutional memory) such that in 2004 the newly elected speaker of the State Assembly is only beginning the second year of his first term in office (the joke going around is that with this trend, the next assembly speaker may be anointed before he or she is even elected to the legislature)
- Political parties and a legislature that, because of a "closed" primary system, are dominated by the far-left and far-right wings of their memberships, and a reapportionment in 2000 that virtually guarantees incumbent reelection, even for those with a narrow ideological base
- Super-sized campaign financing delivered almost exclusively by special interests
- A decades-long history of ballot-box legislation through the initiative process, leaving the legislature with discretion over less than one-sixth of the state budget

- A two-thirds vote requirement to adopt a state budget (a requirement in only two other states), which leads to budget impasse followed by late-night pork-barreling of the worst sort
- An electorate that is deeply alienated from the political process and deeply distrustful of state government

On the positive side, however, are the following:

- California has hit bottom so hard that political support for radical reforms could be substantial (but will they be of the government-bashing sort or the better-government sort?)
- Governor Schwarzenegger is contemplating serious (radical) reforms and has put into place a cabinet that comes largely from the so-called reform wing of California's new civic movement
- The media have raised expectations and are covering Sacramento intensely, thus creating a possible stage for citizen activism
- California's regional civic organizations, with support from the California Center for Regional Leadership (CCRL), are mobilizing like never before to get directly involved in shaping state policy

These tale-of-two-cities, best-of-times-worst-of-times considerations create a special impetus for acquainting people from around the country with the burgeoning regional civic movement in California. This article is based on a CCRL report of June 2003 entitled "California Regional Network: Regions Working Together for a Better California." The material from the report has been updated to take current circumstances into account.

The State of the California Dream

Historically, it has been said that “as California goes, so goes the nation.” A hundred years ago California was the birthplace of the nation’s last significant civic movement, during the Progressive Era. Even in recent decades California has a history of setting economic, political, and cultural trends, in part because it is the state of innovation and enterprise, and in part because it is by far the most populous state in the nation (and the world’s sixth largest economy). But in recent years we seem to be having more difficulty solving our problems. The state is challenged as never before, with a major power crisis, an unprecedented budget deficit, and failures to address fundamental inadequacies in education and health care. Water shortages, traffic gridlock, unaffordable housing . . . the list of infrastructure challenges is long and growing.

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As California’s population moved past the thirty-five million mark in 2002,¹ on the way to forty-eight million by 2020, our ability to accommodate future growth, while at the same time furnishing decent, satisfying jobs and livable communities, will be severely challenged. Population growth is a double-edged sword. The rich cultural fabric of the state is, of course, enhanced by diversity. New immigrants bring a wealth of ideas, energy, expertise, and talent. But there can also be competition between diverse populations for influence and resources. California, like no other place in the world, is challenged to make pluralism work, for everyone.

According to the United Way,² in 1999 California ranked in the bottom 25 percent nationally on a

number of important quality-of-life indicators. The state was fortieth in the percentage of population living in poverty, forty-second in employment, forty-fifth in housing affordability, forty-ninth in pupil-to-teacher ratios in public schools, forty-fifth in children medically uninsured, forty-fifth in voting propensity, forty-first in violent crimes, and forty-seventh in people living in counties that meet air pollution standards.

California has large and generally successful regional economies, but it must continue to compete in a global marketplace, taking nothing for granted. We have a fundamentally sound economy with a gross state product over \$1.2 trillion. California’s economy accounts for 13 percent of the nation’s output, with particular strength in computers, software, agriculture, aerospace, motion pictures, and general manufacturing. On the other hand, some of our regions, especially in the Central Valley, are struggling with structural unemployment, and our inner cities in many of our metropolitan regions are among the nation’s poorest. In order to continue to compete globally, California needs a world-class educational system. California’s diverse economy is well suited to withstand downturns, but it is constantly challenged with the high-cost of doing business—allowing competitors across the world to catch up, in innovation and productivity. All these factors—competitive industries, skilled workforce, quality of life, and effective state and local government—are relevant to our economic competitiveness, and all are in dire need of attention.

How and Why a New Civic Movement Can Help

Our communities depend upon leadership at a number of levels: federal, state, county, and local governments among them—in addition to the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. When consensus and coordination are lacking among stakeholders, progress stalls, and worthwhile initiatives can derail. Government, private businesses, and community groups have cultural differences that often impede working relationships. Even within government, dis-

connects abound, among departments and agencies and across jurisdictions—particularly where multiple geographies are involved.

With the advent of California's term limits, the political scene has changed dramatically. Newly elected state legislators have little time to master the intricacies of policy and government functions before they have to focus on their next office and begin campaigning. This can affect judgment and detract from long-term, big-picture thinking and decision making. A highly polarized apportionment process further compounds this effect. Legislative districts are designed to create safe seats for the major parties, resulting in many elections being decided in the primary campaign. This can silence the voices of moderate candidates, taking a toll on the quality of public debate. The resulting polarization and parochialism create barriers to long-range planning and regional thinking. The cost of campaigning is soaring, and the opportunity for special-interest influence is greater than ever.

This governmental dysfunction forces even well-intended decision makers to operate within mismatched structures and irrational rules. In the face of this, our media and civic leaders have an opportunity—and an obligation—to offer objective information, inform the public, and assist the governing process. We can accomplish this by researching issues in a balanced and rational way, communicating to decision makers, and involving communities.

In recent years, an important leadership group has emerged: leaders who consider the interests of communities from a regional perspective. In the mid-1990s, a new phenomenon began to take hold across the state of California: the unification of purpose and values of regional civic organizations. With the support of the James Irvine Foundation, what later came to be known as *regional collaboratives* (RCs) began to meet and engage one another on the statewide level. From rural expanses covering thousands of square miles in the eastern Sierra to the

dense industrialized areas of Los Angeles and Orange Counties, these civic entrepreneurs came together to discover how they could share values, combine efforts, build consensus, and leverage resources to strengthen their regions—and through these combined efforts improve the quality of life for residents throughout the state.

In recent years, an important leadership group has emerged: leaders who consider the interests of communities from a regional perspective.

These regional collaboratives are dedicated to developing broad-based, long-term strategies for regional and statewide problem-solving strategies that go beyond the limits of politics and special interests. Through active engagement of stakeholders, the groups bring an all-important civic element to public-private partnering. What sets these organizations apart is their willingness to take on regional and statewide challenges in a thoughtful and responsible way. Research won out over rhetoric, and aggressive stakeholder engagement replaced top-down management practices. Consensus developed around the principle of promoting economic prosperity, quality of life, and opportunity for all—and simultaneously, not as trade-offs for one another. With a commitment to solid research and fact-based decision making, the groups are able to enlighten the public debate both regionally and statewide.

Background of the Movement

In regions across the state of California, organizations have sprung up to provide a civic forum for the exercise of regional stewardship. By stewardship we mean taking responsibility for the future of the region, based on the principle of sustainability: meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In some cases these organizations began in order to enhance economic development; in others, it was to promote regional sustainability. Some

responded to crisis, and still others were led by a handful of visionaries. Since the mid-1990s, these regional stewards have also engaged one another statewide—meeting annually, collaboratively sharing tools and practices, and assisting one another with research and information development. Recognizing the increasing complexity of public policy, the collaboratives have developed a holistic approach to regional and statewide planning and strategies. Each and every issue facing today’s Californians affects one or more other issues—and each is addressed in the context of a full range of factors, without parochial or jurisdictional limitations. Fortunately, many Californians are beginning to realize that the economy, quality of life, and even social relations are inextricably linked and should be improved through regional strategies and enhanced civic engagement.

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What Are Regional Collaboratives?

The volunteer base of regional collaboratives ranges from resident activists to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, and from university presidents to social service providers. Unique to the collaboratives is their ability to bring a range of constituents and leadership to the same forum: grassroots and “grasstops.” Because of their stewardship values, inclusionary principles, and unique honest-broker role in the regions, the collaboratives are able to build on a foundation of credibility and trust. Their viability and effectiveness depend upon these important attributes. Stakeholder perception is key in constituting an objective forum for discussing and resolving important issues. Spirited dialogue and interesting challenges are products of the rich diversity of backgrounds, expertise, and opinions of partici-

pants. The one common denominator in these dialogues—the quality that ultimately wins the day—is the participants’ shared concern for their communities. They have pride in their neighborhoods and are making a continuing investment of time and resources to protect their quality of life.

Many regional collaboratives are alliances of leading governmental and nongovernmental organizations, permitting direct access to and through the regions’ civic and community organizations. They take many organizational forms, appropriate to the region. For example, the San Diego Dialogue, which works in the San Diego-Tijuana binational region, is structured differently from the Sierra Business Council, working across the twelve counties of the mountain range; the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities, working across the 110 jurisdictions of the San Francisco Bay Area is structured yet another way. Form follows function.

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What Do Regional Collaboratives Do?

A regional collaborative is able to work locally, as a single organization, together with other collaboratives in an issue-based cluster, or as part of a coordinated statewide network. This flexible format is adaptable to most programs, issues, and initiatives, establishing an appropriate scope and scale. RCs can initiate complex communications and dialogue at the state, regional, county, and local levels.

A number of regional collaborative competencies have been identified.

Regional Stewards. Regional collaboratives take civic responsibility for their regions.

Convening and Facilitation. Collaboratives have done well at establishing themselves as respected and objective honest brokers in the public debate. Rather than direct advocacy, their role is to make certain that policy decisions rest upon reliable information and broad consensus.

Collaboratives are a forum for the exchange of ideas among area leaders in government, the public sector, the private sector, and the all-important civic sector. As neutral conveners, they are also able to effectively reach out to the necessary community stakeholders. Support is extended to meetings, symposia, and forums, in the form of outreach, expertise, facilitation, and sponsorship.

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Collaboration and Consensus Building. The collaboratives are able to advance consensus building as an important part of the community culture. With sufficient regional expertise to broach virtually any issue, the collaboratives can bring strong academic talents and credible data to the discussion. Leaders are also able to aggressively mediate working groups and assist them in establishing strategies and drawing conclusions.

Research and Information. The collaboratives conduct research and develop data, furnishing studies and reports to address regional issues and challenges. This includes developing region-specific demographics, statistics, and specialized information. This process is usually grant-funded, with the material being made available to consumers without charge.

Field Research, Focus Groups, and Polling. An important element in any public policy decision is to be certain that the wants and needs of stakeholders are

understood. To this end, regional collaboratives engage the affected constituency and thoroughly assess their needs. Polling is a useful tool in monitoring progress and assessing the attitudes of businesses and residents within a given region.

Identifying Issues and Organizing the Response. In dealing with challenges, the most immediate needs are identification of issue champions and recruitment of initiative leaders. Regional collaboratives generally have ready access to the leaders and experts in their regions who are deeply involved in the issues of the day. The collaboratives are able to respond quickly in establishing roundtables, forums, and working groups. Using modern communications techniques, their networks can be mobilized within hours if necessary. Upon determining that a strategic partner or other organization is best suited to take leadership, the collaborative's role may also be supportive and supplemental. Giving deference to strategic partners is the key to maintaining positive alliances within the region.

Policy Development. As a credible source, regional collaboratives are able to reliably interpret issues, bring out new information or data, develop policy recommendations, build consensus, and advocate for adoption of reform policies.

Implementation: Intermediary and Agency Services. Working as nonprofits, collaboratives are competent to interface between government programs and the public they serve. This can range from economic development programming to research, loan packaging, and small business development, as well as land use and strategic planning.

Outreach and Public Affairs. Working as conveners, the collaboratives assist government in outreach and interaction with the public. The cardinal rule of collaboration is inclusion; the regional collaboratives can offer direct opportunities for exposing issues to groups that are economically, ethnically, and organizationally diverse. Because of their significance and

involvement within their regions, they are able to draw the attention of the media and focus the public on important issues.

In addition, a number of collaborative issues have been identified.

Economic Development. Working with various government and nongovernmental agencies, many of the regional collaboratives provide leadership for starting up, retaining, or attracting commerce and businesses in their regions, and helping to grow the economy. This builds regional capital, creates quality jobs and careers, and broadens the base of opportunity.

Support for Education and Workforce Investment. Education is widely recognized as the highest priority for the future of California's communities. Many collaboratives devote substantial resources to working with the educational community, establishing programming for enhancement of the workforce.

Planning and Infrastructure Investment. Regional collaboratives engage policy makers and citizens in envisioning and planning for the future of their regions. They also try to identify highest-priority infrastructure investment needs and ways to meet those needs, including innovative financing and delivery systems.

Economic Opportunity. Collaboratives have taken leadership in efforts to extend economic opportunity to poor or underskilled individuals and to encourage reinvestment in low-income neighborhoods.

Natural Resource Protection. Many of the collaboratives offer leadership in planning and financing the protection of open space, park and recreation areas, and wildlife habitat.

Measuring Progress. Through community indicator reports, regional collaboratives collect and disseminate data on critical issues in their communi-

ties, to educate the public, help set community priorities, and create constituencies for the action of decision makers and public and private sector leaders.

Why Regions? Geography, Economy, and Society

California is home to an eclectic mix of regions. Some are defined by geography, such as the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sierra Nevada, and the San Fernando Valley. Others are identified by their economic borders, as in the two-and-a-half-county Silicon Valley. Many regions are based upon settlement patterns, as with the Inland Empire and the six-county Sacramento region.

In the early days of California, trade routes developed along the coast and through the valleys, straddling passes and negotiating canyons. These pathways combined with waterways and railroads to create a natural framework for our regions. One of the most important infrastructure developments within the state was the California Mission Culture, which rose up along El Camino Real (the King's Highway) with its twenty-one missions, pueblos, and presidios strategically positioned along the California coast, each one day's travel from the next.

In recent years we have also come to understand *economic regions*, where industries cluster into supplier and customer networks and rely on educational systems that deliver the needed workers, and on transportation systems that efficiently convey people and goods to their destinations.

For the first half of the twentieth century, cities and towns were the places where we lived and worked. But with population growth and settlement patterns, new suburbs began to spring up at the outer edge of metropolitan regions or fill the gaps between existing cities. Today, nearly universal use of the automobile and roads has resulted in most of us living, working, shopping, playing, and worshipping in multiple jurisdictions.

How Do We Make Regions Work for Us?

The scope and geography of a *decisional region* is the result of naturally occurring physical or issue characteristics rather than artificial or arbitrary circumstances. A region may be a combination of multiple counties or comprise pieces or subdivisions of counties and cities. A region is an all-inclusive place, sharing common and collective interests. Place-based decision making requires that a region be identified and conform to the interests involved in each issue. The regional collaboratives have defined regions of interest as their primary (but not exclusive) service areas, where the residents and businesses have more or less naturally occurring common interests—common labor market, commuting corridors, newspapers, and shared identification. These areas function as a single zone for trade, commerce, and communication and are characterized by social, economic, and environmental interdependence.

Why Does Regionalism Open up New Pathways to Collaborative Problem Solving?

The most critical stakeholders in any collaboration are those who are, or will be, positively or negatively affected by the outcomes. Early engagement in the collaborative process is essential. The sooner acceptance and support can be developed, the better the chance for a successful conclusion. In these changing times, neither political jurisdictions nor social sectors accurately define issues or stakeholders in all cases. Decision makers and civic leaders at the local, county, and state levels must collaborate from the outset to understand the nature of the problem. They must practice *boundary crossing* to do so, bringing together divergent interests, jurisdictions, and agencies on a common problem-solving mission.

There are some issues, such as transportation, where boundary crossing is more obviously indicated—where following the natural geography or confining thinking to a single region is actually counterproductive. Transportation has an innate cross-jurisdictional and interregional nature. In these cases, arbitrary

political boundaries create unnecessary factions and promote parochial thinking.

Numerous issues lend themselves to regional thinking and action:

- Land use visioning, planning, and growth management
- Open space and conservation
- Housing, transportation, and other physical infrastructure
- Arraying and analyzing statistical information and presenting quality-of-life indicators
- Education and workforce
- Investment
- Economic and social opportunity
- Health care and social services
- Business start-ups, retention, and attraction
- Crime and public safety
- Civic engagement, inclusion, leadership development, and advocacy

Accomplishments of Regional Collaboratives

The past few years have seen unprecedented accomplishments through the work of California's regional collaboratives. Each has its own unique set of issues, but some common issues exist as well—issues that are of statewide concern cutting across regions. Although each collaborative may have a dozen or more ongoing initiatives, here are some noteworthy examples of successes and achievements:

- *Action Pajaro Valley* led a multiyear community visioning and planning effort to update the Watsonville General Plan in a manner designed to accommodate future population growth and maintain prime farmland and wildlife habitat. The proposal was adopted by the voters by a substantial margin.
- *Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities* has just released a community indicators report, measuring the progress of the region across thirty-two categories of community well-being. Through its Livability Footprint project, it has also influ-

A Prime Example: Regional Community Indicators over the Last Ten Years

The core values shared by regional collaboratives are anchored in sustainability and the Community Indicators movement. Early on, the groups recognized that regional stewardship required benchmarks to be established and monitored in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, and as a basis for strategic planning. Indicators are also seen as a means of evaluating the progress and outcomes of various community initiatives.

Community indicators are intended to measure the quality of life using quantifiable data. Some of the most common areas of concern are the economy, infrastructure, environment, utilities, health care, education, transportation, public safety, housing, volunteerism, civic engagement, and culture. The network of regional collaboratives is working toward the development of a common set of core indicators that can be measured in and across regions, as well as at the state level.

Community indicators have become potent tools in the arsenal of regional groups. They assist in informing the public debate, giving leadership decision-making tools, and supplying a foundation for sustainability programming.

[Note: In late 2003 the California Center for Regional Leadership published “Telling Our Story, Measuring Our Progress: California’s Regional Quality of Life Indicator Projects,” which describes and analyzes for the first time California’s fourteen regional indicator reports, now routinely produced with RCs as lead sponsors. Copies of the report are available for download from CCRL at www.calregions.org, or in hard copy from CCRL, 200 Pine St., Ste. 400, San Francisco, CA 94105.]

enced creation of a Smart Growth Initiative to guide development across the entire Bay Area.

- *Community Development Technologies Center in Los Angeles* is bringing a new vision of a “restorative economy” to the challenge of creating good jobs and livable neighborhoods in underinvested inner-city communities.
- *Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley* undertook Vision2020, a regional planning col-

laboration covering a five-city, two-county region. The alliance is also engaged in attracting and retaining industry in order to expand business and develop job opportunities, and in regional workforce investment initiatives.

- *Fresno Area Collaborative Regional Initiative* has five initiatives under way, including an effort to build collaboration and capacity in the region’s human services and nonprofit agency communities. It also developed a statement of values (the “Community Values of the Fresno Region”), which it is asking all organizations, large and small, public and private, to adopt as their own, and a commitment to having those values guide their work.
- *Gateway Cities Partnership* has established a Real Estate Recycling Team to develop innovative approaches for reusing industrial land and has pioneered in developing grassroots community plans for sustainability.
- *Inland Empire Economic Partnership Foundation* is developing the region’s first-ever community indicators report.
- *Institute of the North Coast’s* economic development strategy, Prosperity Network, has become part of the official economic development strategy for Humboldt County. The network maintains a common database, sharing leads and maintaining well-defined collaborative roles in its program of entrepreneurial support.
- *Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network* assisted local planning agencies to streamline the process for securing building permits through adoption of the Smart Permit program—online review of applications—thus capitalizing on the technology strengths of the region. In the face of the dot-com downturn, through the Next Silicon Valley Project, Joint Venture is now leading the way for new innovative industry clusters.
- *Metropolitan Forum Project of Los Angeles* is leading a statewide New Schools/Better Neighborhoods movement, promoting a vision for new public schools to become centers of vital neighborhoods and for neighborhoods to become centers of learning.

- *Orange County Business Council* is engaging a broad cross-section of community and business leaders in assessing the need for infrastructure planning and investment and in identifying policy strategies to achieve success. It also is leading a state-of-the-art workforce investment project.
- *Regional Civic Alliance of Ventura County*, one of the state's newest RCs, recently released its first quality-of-life indicators report, "The State of the Region: Ventura County 2003."
- *South Bay Economic Partnership* has taken the lead in a program across Los Angeles County addressing a shortage of competitive industrial sites and the need for master-planned industrial communities. It is also assisting three cities with a community land use and economic development project to revitalize the Rosecrans East Boulevard corridor.
- *San Diego Dialogue* has yielded visionary leadership in seeing San Diego and Tijuana as a single region and pioneered solutions for cross-border understanding and cooperation. Its Forum *Fronterizo* supports ongoing collaboration between civic leaders on both sides of the Mexican-American border.
- *San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation* has helped make San Diego the number one choice for business and careers, according to *Forbes Magazine* and the Millken Institute. The EDC is a leader in addressing housing and transportation challenges in its region. It has also developed a program that brings business leaders into the high schools, making the crucial connection among school, skills, and careers. This helps to ensure that today's students will be prepared to seize tomorrow's opportunities.
- *San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership* has just finished developing Workforce San Gabriel Valley, a collaborative strategic plan to harness the prodigious intellectual capital of the area.
- *Sierra Business Council* has developed national award-winning planning and economic development strategies that will maintain the quality of

How Regional Collaboratives Are Funded

The base funding for regional collaboratives comes primarily from local sources. This includes supportive business and industry, local philanthropy, governmental agencies, infrastructure and utilities, airports, ports, and metropolitan planning organizations.

These supporters see the work of the collaboratives as an extension of their own, and as an opportunity to engage the added *civic* element to leverage public-private partnerships. Statewide and national foundations also support this work, particularly where collaboratives working together can achieve statewide impacts or where multisite demonstration projects advance the purpose of improving program design and implementation.

Both economically and environmentally grounded collaboratives have, through development of targeted grant funding, been able to widen their involvement and delve into nontraditional issues and initiatives. Foundations and other public interest resources view the collaboratives as an extension of their portfolio, with the ability to implement the goals and objectives of regional, state, and national programs and foundations.

small-town life, protect natural resources, and create family-wage jobs for the region's residents. In particular, its rural economic development strategies do not rely exclusively on traditional extractive industries or externally driven income streams.

- *Tri-Valley Business Council* is working to identify a sufficient water supply to maintain its agricultural economy and to protect open space. They are supporting affordable housing efforts in existing towns, to reduce cross-regional commutes and retain workers for high-value-added businesses.
- *Valley Vision* has partnered with the Sacramento Area Council of Governments in a regional growth visioning project, Blueprint, that involves thousands of citizens across the six-county region in imagining land use and development patterns that would protect community livability and accommodate population growth.

Who are the regional collaboratives' natural partners in their regions?

- *Schools and educational institutions* are natural partners for the collaboratives. Education, in all of its forms, is the base for economic development, job creation, and social opportunities. When educators are brought to the table, they are able to contribute valuable insights, and in return better understand the intellectual needs of the regional economy.
- *Regional business organizations and industry partners* give collaboratives access to economic information and a broadened group of civic activists, frequently finding common ground amid growth, quality-of-life, and sustainability issues. In return, the collaboratives can be a vehicle for community reinvestment, for public affairs, and for outreach initiatives.
- *Municipalities* are aided in their mission to serve their residents. They are able to better leverage their investments in community development, outreach, and strategic planning, and they assist in working with other localities on multijurisdictional strategies and projects.
- *Counties* carry out the core functions of regional government. They benefit from interaction with the larger-scale civic constituencies represented in the regional collaboratives.
- *Faith-based and social service organizations* gain access to government and to the business community and are able to advance issues of inclusion, access, and equality.
- *Visitor's and convention bureaus* are able to build larger followings around regional marketing and tourism, as well as working in concert with the collaborative's other partners in various promotions and activities.
- *Seaports and airports* are regionally significant. They have great importance in the overall infrastructure and economic impact on the regions they serve. They benefit through closer connections to regional leadership, and by having a vehicle for outreach and public affairs programming.
- *Infrastructure and utility service providers* are always involved in public policy work, infrastructure development, and community outreach. These are also a high priority with collaboratives, who benefit from close working relationships with these service providers.
- *Metropolitan planning organizations* need to interface with diverse leadership in business, government, and the community. As conveners, planners, and policy makers, the collaboratives are a natural extension of regional and subregional coordination and consensus building.
- *Banks and financial institutions* are especially involved in community reinvestment, and the collaboratives amount to a conduit for such programming, as well as providing a platform for extended outreach. The banking industry has a keen understanding of the need for working closely with the community.
- *Philanthropic organizations* are aided in their mission through the substantial implementation capacities of the collaboratives. The RCs have the needed expertise and representation within the community and among its leadership. They are able to competently interface in the grant and funding process, and ultimately to deliver meaningful and credible programming.
- *Environmental groups* form the backbone of sustainability initiatives, offering guidance and strategies for balancing priorities. They work with the RCs in developing consensus on preservation of resources and maintenance of the quality of life of the regions.
- *Homeowners' associations* are able to participate with planners and developers in the give-and-take of growth management, land use, and public policy. Homeowners make up a formidable group with concerns that are critical to the public debate. It is important that they be brought into discussions at the earliest stages.
- *Merchants' associations and business improvement district boards* are natural allies in the realm of economic development. They are able to furnish working models for urban renewal and

A Word About the Philanthropic Community

Regional collaboratives are ideally situated to present programming to assist in realizing the regional, statewide, and national goals of the philanthropic community. They have a natural ability to marshal expertise from all sectors; develop strategies at the highest levels; and implement at the regional, municipal, or neighborhood level.

As messengers, the RCs are networked with the leaders of the communities in their regions as well as at the state and federal levels. With their regional presence and community-grounded capacities, collaboratives also possess the requisite sophistication to administer public policy programming and manage subgrant allocations. Many are allied with community foundations, and some have their own internal philanthropic communities.

[*Note:* The Alliance for Regional Stewardship has recently published a monograph commissioned by the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities entitled "Metropolitan Regional Grantmaking: Promising Practices and the Stewardship of Place," which describes and analyzes the "regionalist" grant-making philosophy and actions of eighteen local, regional, statewide, and national foundations. Copies of this report are available for download from ARS at www.regionalstewardship.org, or in hard copy from ARS, 1009 Grant St., Ste. 203, Denver, CO 80203.]

for cultivating pedestrian-oriented districts, main streets, and town centers.

California Center for Regional Leadership

The California Center for Regional Leadership is a statewide nonprofit organization established in 2000 to work with the state's twenty-one regional collaboratives in supporting, facilitating, and promoting innovative regional solutions for major economic, environmental, and societal challenges. CCRL assists the regional collaboratives through program development and support and sharing of best practices. For example, CCRL has just completed the first-ever inventory and analysis of California's regional and local community indicator reports. Community indicators are a cornerstone of

RC and CCRL programming, reporting the progress of the state's regions by benchmarking and monitoring economic, environmental, and social progress. The collaborative network has embarked upon the state's first-ever effort to measure California's progress, building upon region-based indicators.

CCRL also assists regional collaboratives to organize for collaborative action, whether in the realm of program development, cooperative fundraising, or policy reform. CCRL convenes the executive leadership of the RCs several times a year and holds the annual Civic Entrepreneur Summit at which teams from the collaboratives meet with state and national experts, statewide interest groups, and state policy makers on critical issues facing California's regions. Together CCRL and the regional collaboratives have just formed the California Regional Network as the foundation for their work together on cross-regional and statewide issues.

CCRL has also engaged in efforts to advance state policy and program reforms to support regional strategies and advance sustainable communities. Among other efforts, CCRL has provided leadership or strategic support to the assembly speaker's Commission on Regionalism, the governor's Commission on Building for the Twenty-First Century (the Infrastructure Commission), the California Economic Strategy Panel, the California Workforce Investment Board, and the Commission on Tax Policy in the New Economy.

CCRL works with many partners in efforts to follow up on the recommendations of the speaker's Commission on Regionalism and the governor's Commission on Building for the Twenty-First Century. CCRL is the managing partner of the California Policy Reform Network, a partnership among fourteen statewide and regional business, labor, and civic organizations addressing state policy reform in the area of infrastructure planning and investment to accommodate population growth.

Early successes include reestablishment of the California Economic Strategy panel; creation of a state Labor and Workforce Development Agency; funding for planning and development of joint-use school facilities; adoption of state goals for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; adoption of statewide planning goals that are based on the principles of sustainability; adoption of regional self-sufficiency principles for water supply and quality; support for state bond measures for parks, water, and affordable housing; development of budget set-asides for infrastructure investment; and new proposals to reform property tax law to defiscalize land use decision making.

The California Economic Strategy Panel is working to secure the long-term competitiveness of California’s regional economies. CCRL is partnering with the panel and others to implement “A Call to Action,” a policy framework that recommends innovative strategies for improving the economic competitiveness of the state’s regions. The panel is focused on generating reliable, timely, and user-friendly economic data to ensure better understanding of the comparative advantages and challenges of regional economies.

The California Workforce Investment Board has developed its first long-term strategic plan with the assistance of CCRL. The plan is used to guide state policy makers, local boards, and other workforce investment partners in adopting strategies to improve access to well-paying jobs and rewarding careers for all Californians. The plan improves the board’s ability to guide and advise the governor, the legislature, and local workforce investment boards on state-of-the-art policies and programs.

CCRL works directly with regional public agencies and is currently assisting the Southern California Compass project, the nation’s largest-ever regional growth visioning effort. In anticipation of six million new residents over the next thirty years, the Southern California Association of

Shared Values and Principles

California Regional Network Values (adopted 2003)

- *Stewardship*: Commitment to practice regional stewardship—working to achieve the greatest long-term benefit for the regions and for the state of California
- *Innovation*: Commitment to share new ideas, strategies, policies, and programs so that together we can continue to learn and improve our effectiveness
- *Collaboration*: Commitment to serve as facilitators and honest brokers in the public debate—incorporating all stakeholders and considering all factors—with special regard for the integrity of the collaborative process
- *Strong economy*: Commitment to build healthy regional economies for California through knowledge, innovation, strategic engagement, and accountability
- *Environmental stewardship*: Commitment to advance policies and practices that promote sustainable communities and preserve California’s quality of life
- *Equity through opportunity*: Commitment to inclusion and empowerment, serving the interests of all people and cultures
- *Diverse engagement*: Commitment to collaboration and engagement across the full spectrum of interests, institutions, and communities; and in partnerships among the civic, public, and private sectors
- *Regional scale and scope*: Commitment to right-sized solutions—collaborating on a region-based, multijurisdictional or interagency level—appropriate to effective problem solving

Governments has launched this project to develop growth scenarios for the region; CCRL is assisting the project team with outreach and conducting public workshops and with developing policy and program recommendations emerging from the project.

Finally, CCRL helps to connect California’s regional civic movement to such national organizations as the Alliance for Regional Stewardship and the Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities.

Conclusion: Profiles in Civic Entrepreneurship—the Regional Collaboratives

In dealing with many issues, we are constrained to work either at the micro level, with nearly five hundred cities in the state of California, or at a macro level, with the state government. California's fifty-eight county governments can offer some assistance in regional thinking. But city incorporations are selective and inconsistent, leaving counties with large, unnaturally configured areas of residual territories.

Statewide organizations tend to develop a one-size-fits-all solution and have difficulty responding to the needs of an individual region. A cooperative and inclusive civic collaborative can provide essential linkage between local and regional needs on the one hand and state-level action on the other. By working through objective nonpartisan facilitation and con-

sensus building, the collaboratives develop information, inform the public debate, and draw attention to critical issues.

Collaboratives are able to fill this need through intraregional engagement and interregional cooperation. They are capable of generating credible reports and developing strategies to enlighten local leaders, using their statewide networking capacity to focus attention and resources on important regional issues.

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NOTES

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2002.
2. United Way, *United Way State of Caring Index*.

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