



San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center Announces Multi-Year Partnership with The Brookings Institution

Multi-year partnership with The Brookings Institution is aimed at providing scalable local impact

SAN DIEGO (Sept. 27, 2021) – The San Diego Foundation and The Brookings Institution today announced the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center, a first-of-its-kind, long-term partnership focused on conducting place-based research and policy analysis to help address the region's biggest problems and bring new federal infrastructure funding to the region.

The San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center, a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of The San Diego Foundation, builds partnerships to create cross-sector, multi-jurisdictional solutions to problems that require massive collective effort and extend beyond the reach of any single agency or department. These include regional challenges such as climate resilience, critical infrastructure, creating stable, high-paying jobs, homelessness, housing affordability and health equity.

"We have learned so much in the last 19 months as COVID-19 revealed some of our greatest structural challenges – health risks, economic instability and inequity of opportunity," said Mark Stuart, President and CEO of The San Diego Foundation. "We recognize that a robust, equitable recovery will require us to address major structural problems. The Policy & Innovation Center and our alliance with The Brookings Institution is our response to the need for integrated, collaborative policy solutions to enable transformational systems change."

Described by The Economist as "perhaps America's most prestigious think tank" and consistently ranked as one of the top think tanks in the world, The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit organization devoted to independent research and policy solutions. Its mission is to conduct high-quality, independent research, and based on that research, to provide innovative, practical recommendations for policymakers and the public.

"San Diego County reflects our nation in many ways – it is a thriving economy in an urban-rural region, with a diverse population greater than 20 states," said John R. Allen, President of The Brookings Institution. "Most importantly, San Diego's local leaders recognize that our challenges are bigger than any single city, department or agency. I applaud them for stepping up to the moment and looking for ways to be both strategic and proactive."



Brookings's Metropolitan Policy Program scholars will work with local San Diego leaders to identify catalytic policies, programs, and interventions and help attract greater capital to the region. The team of scholars supporting the Policy & Innovation Center include [Adie Tomer](#), Senior Fellow; [Jenny Schuetz](#), Senior Fellow; and [Joe Kane](#), Fellow.

"By joining forces with The Brookings Institution, the Policy & Innovation Center will grow regional consensus for systems change, test concepts to accelerate investment, serve as a bridge to federal opportunities, and co-develop new regional policy solutions with local government and stakeholders," said Susan Guinn, President and CEO of the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center.

The Policy & Innovation Center will be advised by a Government & Agency Advisory Council with representation from municipalities and government agencies within San Diego County. The Chair of the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors, Nathan Fletcher, will serve as the Chair of the Advisory Council.

"We know that data and research are most helpful when they are connected to better outcomes for communities in need," said Shalini Vajjhala, Executive Director of the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center. "Our immediate focus is supporting the recovery from the cascading effects of COVID-19. We are already co-designing new programs to bring large-scale federal recovery and infrastructure funds to the region by working with local municipalities and regional agencies."

The Policy & Innovation Center team has already developed more than \$17 million in funding proposals to lay the groundwork for significant large-scale federal grants and projects to address critical needs such as:

- **Aligning infrastructure to address digital inequalities** and explore where and how to extend cost-effective broadband services to underserved community by aligning investment in streets and water system upgrades and integrating fire and flood risk monitoring for at-risk areas across the County.
- **Moving from utility bill relief to long-term affordability** and developing a model to help families who have been struggling to afford their water and electricity bills get property upgrades that improve affordability and regional sustainability.
- **Supporting emerging leaders in green infrastructure** and working with national partners through a grant-funded program to increase the capacity of cities in federal grant writing, green infrastructure project delivery and equity-focused collaboration.



"Our region faces a tremendous opportunity as we recover from COVID-19 and build back better," said Nathan Fletcher, Chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "The San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center will help our region do just that, and address the underlying inequities that have made a new policy outlook necessary. I am pleased to serve as Chair of the Advisory Council and make positive change in San Diego County."

To immediately begin addressing the region's issues, the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center will host a daylong convening with Government & Agency Advisory Council members on Tuesday, Sept 28. Virtual events that day will include an opening session with center leadership, presentations by The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program scholars, and a fireside chat with Amy Liu, Vice President and Director with the Brookings Institution, and Mark Cafferty, President & CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. Convening meeting recordings will be available on the Policy & Innovation Center website.

About the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center

The San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center is a new 501(c)(3) organization of The San Diego Foundation that develops, tests, and implements world-class research and policy-driven solutions to address San Diego's most pressing challenges. Learn more at sdrpic.org.

About The Brookings Institution

The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit organization devoted to independent research and policy solutions. Its mission is to conduct high-quality, independent research, and based on that research, to provide innovative, practical recommendations for policymakers and the public. Learn more at Brookings.edu.

About The San Diego Foundation

The San Diego Foundation inspires enduring philanthropy and enables community solutions to improve the quality of life in our region. Our strategic priorities include advancing racial and social justice, fostering equity of opportunity, building resilient communities, and delivering world-class philanthropy to realize our vision of just, equitable and resilient communities. For more than 46 years, The Foundation and its donors have granted more than \$1.3 billion to support nonprofit organizations strengthening our community. Learn more at SDFoundation.org.

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