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**Collaborative Regional Initiatives:  
Civic Entrepreneurs Work to Fill the Governance Gap**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*This paper is a cross-cutting analysis of research conducted by the Institute of Urban and Regional Development and funded by the James Irvine Foundation.*

In addition to this cross-cutting analysis, the team also published in-depth case studies of the four major Collaborative Regional Initiatives studied—the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities, Joint Venture: Silicon Valley, the San Diego Dialogue, and the Sierra Business Council—as well as an analysis of regional workforce development initiatives in California. Case study findings were published individually and the studies are cited below for your convenience.



Chapple, Karen. 2005. *Building Institutions from the Region Up: Regional Workforce Development Collaboratives in California*. Working Paper 2005-01. Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California.

Christensen, Karen, and Jane Rongerude. 2004. *The San Diego Dialogue: Reshaping the San Diego Region*. Working Paper 2004-04. Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California.

Innes, Judith E. 2004. *Taking the Three 'E's Seriously: The Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities*. Working Paper 2004-07. Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California.

Innes, Judith E. 2004. *Turning Businesspeople into Environmentalists: The Sierra Business Council*. Working Paper 2004-06. Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California.

Saxenian, AnnaLee, and Nadya Chinoy Dabby. 2004. *Creating and Sustaining Regional Collaboration in Silicon Valley? The Case of Joint Venture: Silicon Valley*. Working Paper 2004-05. Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California.



I N S I G H T

Lessons learned from our grantmaking programs

# Collaborative Regional Initiatives

*Civic Entrepreneurs Work to Fill the Governance Gap*

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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>The James Irvine Foundation’s Collaborative Regional Initiatives Program</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Program Purposes and Theory</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Study</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>2</b>
Five Features of CRIs	<b>3</b>
<b>Profiles of the Four CRIs</b>	<b>4</b>
The Sierra Business Council (SBC)	<b>4</b>
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network (JV:SV)	<b>6</b>
San Diego Dialogue (SDD)	<b>9</b>
The Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities (BAASC)	<b>12</b>
<b>CRIs as Models for Filling Gaps in Regional Governance</b>	<b>14</b>
Institutions in Motion	<b>15</b>
Diversity of Goals and Participants	<b>16</b>
Regional Sustainability and the Governance Gap	<b>16</b>
<b>Theories of Change</b>	<b>17</b>
Sierra Business Council: Change Through Dialogue, Research, and Collaboration	<b>17</b>
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley: Applying the Venture Capital Model	<b>18</b>
San Diego Dialogue: Educating Elites	<b>19</b>
Bay Area Alliance for a Sustainable Community: Interest-Group Action, Change Through Forecasts, and Helping the Real Estate Community	<b>20</b>
<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>21</b>
Sierra Business Council: Listening, Convening, and Collaborating	<b>22</b>
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley: A Popular Leader Relies on Networks and a Business Approach	<b>23</b>
San Diego Dialogue: Creating Dialogue Among Elites	<b>24</b>
Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities: Sharing Leadership	<b>25</b>

# Contents

<b>Regional Fit</b>	<b>26</b>
Creating Networks and a Sense of the Sierra Region	26
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley and the Venture Capital Model	26
Small-Town San Diego	27
Building on the Bay Area’s Advocacy Groups	27
<b>Use of Research by CRIs</b>	<b>28</b>
Sierra Business Council: Research Drives the Vision	28
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley: Research to Inform Action	29
San Diego Dialogue: Building Intellectual Capital Through Research and Dialogue	30
Bay Area Alliance for a Sustainable Community: Stakeholders Know Best	31
<b>CRIs as Network Structures</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Conclusions and Reflections</b>	<b>36</b>

## TABLES

Table 1. Five Features of Collaborative Regional Initiatives: A Comparison	3
Table 2. Types of Issues Addressed by Each CRI	3
Table 3. Filling the Governance Gap: Selected Outcomes by CRI	37

## FIGURES

Figure 1. SBC’s Capital Investment Diagram	5
Figure 2. CRI Network Structures	35

**Cover photo:** 2005 Fiscal Reform Summit participants discuss and develop successful reform strategies with small-group facilitator, Pat Leary.

**Photo credit:** Nooshin Navidi, California Center for Regional Leadership

## Foreword

This edition of *Insight* provides a retrospective analysis of grants from The James Irvine Foundation to Collaborative Regional Initiatives (CRIs) throughout California. It is the result of more than three years of research and analysis by a team of faculty and graduate students from the Institute of Urban and Regional Development (IURD) at the University of California, Berkeley. We are grateful to all the members of the IURD team for the expertise they brought to this project and for the sustained effort that was required to evaluate a program of this scale and scope.

CRIs are regional partnerships that bring together Californians from government, business, and community to promote the economic vitality and improve the quality of life in their respective regions. From 1997 to 2004, Irvine invested more than \$20 million in 17 CRIs across the state to test the idea that regional collaboration, in its many forms, could provide a platform for creating long-lasting solutions to the challenges that face California's diverse communities.

In this report, you will learn that CRIs can be important vehicles for engaging people with diverse interests toward a common goal of addressing economic, environmental, or social issues at a regional level. You will also learn that CRIs with certain characteristics have a greater potential for success and why this seems to be the case. By sharing the research and analysis that led our evaluators to these conclusions, we hope to help regional leaders and practitioners learn from our experience and, as a result, to engage in more effective regional action and governance for the betterment of their own communities.

We applaud the work of the CRIs that were a part of this grantmaking program and appreciate their cooperation in the evaluation that followed. In every case, we worked with dedicated and innovative community leaders who were willing to take significant risks to engage in collaborative processes to build better communities. In every case, they helped to develop regional identities and contributed to more sustainable and engaged communities. We hope this report can help other regional leaders to do the same.



James E. Canales  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
The James Irvine Foundation  
November 2005

## Acknowledgements

The research on which this report is based was conducted by Professors Karen Chapple, Karen Christensen, Judith Innes, and AnnaLee Saxenian of the Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley, along with graduate student associates Nadya Chinoy Dabby, Joanne Manson, Eric Nakajima, Jane Rongerude, Gerardo Sandoval, and Enrique Silva. The research team worked together to develop basic concepts for this cross-cutting analysis and reviewed the final draft. David E. Booher, Senior Policy Advisor at the Center for Collaborative Policy and Adjunct Faculty at California State University, Sacramento, assisted in the review and revision process and in developing the tables and figures.

We are grateful to the many CRI members, staff, community leaders, stakeholders, and others who shared their time and wisdom with us in interviews. We also appreciate the contribution of those who read and provided corrections to our case study manuscripts. The leadership of each of the CRIs we studied was cooperative and helpful to this work, opening their files to us and helping us understand their organizations and activities. These dedicated and creative people were, in a fundamental way, collaborative with us on this research. We have tried as much as possible to report the cases in a way that is true to what we heard from these reflective informants.

Also, our deepest thanks go to the hardworking, able, and efficient staff of IURD, who helped us all along the way. We particularly thank Janet Dawson, who spent countless hours setting up interviews and meetings; Chris Amado, who polished our reports for publication; Mary Altez, who kept our accounts with promptness and accuracy; and Barbara Hadenfeldt, who edited this report and contributed in many ways throughout the process.

Finally, we appreciate the thoughtful comments and ideas on this report and the earlier case studies from Martha Campbell, Vice President for Programs at The James Irvine Foundation, and other Irvine staff. Their input was helpful and significantly improved the report.

The assessment team dedicates this report to the memory of Judith Gruber, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, who died June 1, 2005, after a long illness. Her intellect and insight contributed to the design of this study and helped us generate many of the ideas that finally emerged in this report. She was an exceptional colleague, mentor, and friend. She will be missed.

## Executive Summary

Collaborative Regional Initiatives (CRIs) are partnerships that engage diverse stakeholders seeking to enhance economic vitality, increase social equity, and protect the natural environment in California regions. The James Irvine Foundation, which invested more than \$20 million in supporting CRIs, did so on the theory that collaborative efforts that engage participants from multiple sectors are more likely to produce workable solutions to challenges than business-as-usual approaches.

This is a report on a retrospective assessment of Irvine’s CRI grants, which were part of the Foundation’s Sustainable Communities program from 1997 to 2004. While the Foundation has restructured its grantmaking priorities and no longer has a separate Sustainable Communities program, it has also recognized the relevance of what was achieved through the CRIs and invested in a rigorous assessment of it in order to share insights and lessons learned.

This report focuses on four of the most complex and mature CRIs in California:

- The Sierra Business Council (SBC) supported research, dialogue, and projects to help businesspeople and local governments incorporate an understanding of the role of the natural environment across the Sierra region.
- Joint Venture: Silicon Valley (JV:SV) engaged business leaders and other leaders in this high-technology region to develop and implement projects designed to improve its economy, applying a venture capital approach.
- San Diego Dialogue (SDD), which was sponsored by UC San Diego, relied on university research to engage civic leaders at the highest level in identifying problems and issues that required regional action.
- The Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities (BAASC)—a coalition of leaders representing business, the environment, and equity—focused on developing a compact for smart growth and creating socially responsible investment in poor neighborhoods.

Each of these cases is described in the main report and in further depth in individual case studies that are available on the IURD’s Web site. (<http://www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/pub/cri-titles.htm>).

### **CRIs as Models for Filling Gaps in Regional Governance**

The CRIs represent a significant innovation in regional governance and in approaches to improving regional performance. This innovation is reflected in several of the unique aspects of the CRI concept: dynamic and flexible institutional structures, the mobilization of stakeholders from diverse perspectives, and a regional scope. Each of these aspects of a CRI is described further below.



**Institutions in Motion:** CRIs are an institutional form in constant evolution, characterized by networks, flows of information and energy, and distributed intelligence among a wide range of participants. A CRI can be flexible and adaptive to new problems and opportunities—for example, setting up working groups with players appropriate to tasks and disbanding them when they are finished. CRIs are not hierarchical organizations with a leader setting a vision and directing action but are loosely linked players who build shared goals, practices, and heuristics through dialogue and teamwork. Collaboration as a core principle means that the organization’s outputs cannot be controlled or predicted. CRIs have the advantage that many players bring differing knowledge and perspectives, along with up-to-date input about conditions in the region. The collaborative dynamic is critical to engaging the energy of players to continue on their own. The volunteers become committed to the mission in large part because of the dialogue that is central to all the CRIs. This dialogue allows for mutual learning and building of shared purpose, which in turn energizes the participants. CRIs are adaptive organizations, in which participants learn how to act on their own, or with others who represent opposing interests, to achieve common goals.

**Diversity of Goals and Participants:** CRIs, while deeply grounded in the business community, focus on a wide range of issues and incorporate civic leaders such as professional service providers, leaders of nonprofits, and environmental and social equity advocates. They work with many levels of government and engage participants with a variety of backgrounds as collaborators. While none of the CRIs engaged the grassroots, they often included the “grasstops”—those who speak for the less-organized and inchoate public.

**Regional Scope:** The CRIs mobilized civic entrepreneurs to fill gaps in regional governance—gaps created when narrowly focused public agencies failed to address problems that cut across sectors and/or when local jurisdictions had neither incentives nor forums in which to address issues that affected them jointly. Advocacy organizations and other alliances among civic leaders usually lacked diversity and addressed narrow issues. In most regions, no organization addressed sustainability as a broadly conceived issue involving all three E’s (environment, equity, and economy). However, CRIs give joint attention to the regional economy, environment, and quality of life and, in some cases, to the welfare of disadvantaged groups. CRIs share the idea that sustainability can only be achieved by operating at a regional scale.

### Five Features of CRI Operations

Five features of CRIs are most critical to understanding how they function and in comparing them with one another (see Table ES-1, page v). These include the CRI’s theory of change, leadership style, regional fit, use of research, and network structure. These features account, to a considerable degree, for the CRIs’ successes and limitations and demonstrate that there are many ways to approach regional tasks. The theories of change implicit in each CRI’s activities reflect the strategies of their early leaders. These theories, which became embedded in the organizations’ practices, accounted to a considerable extent for the organizations’ degree of effectiveness. The leadership of the CRIs was collaborative and dispersed rather than directive or contained within

a single person, as CRI participants jointly developed agendas and practices. Each CRI’s strategies, framing of issues, and agendas were tailored to its region’s particular political culture and needs. Three of the four CRIs made research central to their change strategy. Finally, CRIs are flexible network organizations involving autonomous players linked by shared understandings and social and political capital. These players are part of the CRI’s distributed intelligence systems, through which much gets accomplished in a self-organizing, adaptive way.

**Table ES-1. Five Features of Collaborative Regional Initiatives: A Comparison**

FEATURE	CRI			
	SBC	JV:SV	SDD	BAASC
Theory of Change	Research and dialogue	Venture capital model	Educating elites	Political coalition
Leadership Style	Listening, convening, collaborating	Connecting to social networks	Personal relationships	Shared decision-making
Regional Fit	Linking economy and environment	Building on regional economic success	Building on small-town style	Convening advocacy groups
Use of Research	Integral to promoting mission and gaining credibility	Building regional identity and measuring progress	Building shared knowledge	Limited and marginal
Network Structure	Distributed, widely dispersed	Teams loosely linked to core	Central node linked to networks	Five-node core with satellite caucuses

**Theories of Change**

The single most critical element in the implementation of a CRI is its theory of change—that is, the principles and logic underlying its strategy of action. The four CRIs each employed a different theory of change.

SBC’s theory was that if it could change business leaders’ understandings of the issues, showing them how protection of the environment can help build the economy, training them in collaboration, and providing process and knowledge support to civic leaders, these people would in turn change the culture and practices of the region. SBC’s theory required research to show how the link between environment and economy worked, explained in ways that would convey ideas to a broad audience. SBC’s theory also involved the idea that genuine learning and change take place through dialogue and interaction.

JV:SV’s theory of change was that the venture capital model of business in Silicon Valley could be successfully applied in the public sphere. The idea is that funders provide initial support to groups that have new ideas and the energy and talent to implement them. Good projects will find their own additional funding while others will not. It was JV:SV’s philosophy to let as many projects emerge as possible. This approach encouraged innovation but also assumed there would be failures. Making progress in this experimental way would entail some failures along with the

successes. This theory required a network structure connecting the many constituencies in the Valley, allowing each node the opportunity to leverage resources and knowledge available to the others. It required enlisting recognized leaders who were capable of working collaboratively and willing to take risks. It required a constant flow of reliable information to help leaders allocate resources and performance measures to track each venture.

SDD's theory of change was grounded in a belief in the power of civic leadership and knowledge. The founders believed that local government could not keep the region strong but that civic-minded elites could push for needed change. Armed with new understandings of the region's problems and possible solutions, these elites would use their personal networks to disseminate their knowledge and implement solutions. This theory required that SDD recruit people with strong reputations as regional leaders and build their intellectual capacity. SDD would provide respected research and create settings for members to interact around this research, building a personal investment in using knowledge to effect change.

BAASC's theory of change was built on a pluralist model of public choice. The idea was that BAASC would assemble a diverse group of stakeholders who would build consensus among themselves and lobby state and local governments. Because of their diversity, their unity would be particularly persuasive. Their tacit theory about how to get this unity was to create a proposal that had something for all the stakeholders and nothing that some could not accept. This model required BAASC to educate regional leaders about its ideas and get them to assist in lobbying for legislative change. The BAASC theory fit the standard practice of policy advocacy: step one, a group identifies a problem and develops the "right" fix for it; step two, it promotes that fix with political pressure and media campaigns; step three, legislatures enact the fix. Unfortunately, the last step, thus far, has eluded BAASC. Its theory also lacked something all three of the other CRI's had—an explicit strategy of using research for joint learning and framing issues.

### **Leadership Style**

Collaborative leadership characterized all the CRIs. The principal CRI leaders worked with others to decide what to do and how. They were hands-on individuals deeply engaged in the missions of their organizations. They provided inspiration and encouragement, created opportunities for joint action, and encouraged others to become leaders in their own right. Their strength came from an ability to work with others to develop shared vision, strategy, and action.

There are many ways to lead collaborative organizations. SBC used the disciple model, beginning by educating a small group of individuals who, in turn, engaged others to carry the message to more disciples. JV:SV's leadership was enabling, facilitative, and encouraging. SDD's model was personal, as its leader built individual relationships with elites, tying them to the organization through personal relationships and opportunities for networking with other elites. BAASC's leadership model was political—articulating a vision, building coalitions, and pressuring decision makers.

## Regional Fit

The CRIs' strength came in large part from the way each was tailored to the dynamics and culture of its region. Each filled a gap left by existing institutions, and each drew on the strengths and practices of the region while trying to compensate for its deficiencies. Each chose issues that were perceived problems but also allowed for enough energy and interest to encourage involvement. Their relative degree of success depended in considerable part on the fit between their overall strategy and agenda, the region's needs, and its political culture. A collaborative effort cannot simply adopt a model from somewhere else and be successful.

For example, the strengths of the Sierra region were its natural beauty, its fiercely independent population, and its growing tourism and recreation sector. Its main weaknesses were internal political conflicts, the failure of civic leaders to recognize the interdependence of their environment and economy, and the lack of a regional identity. SBC leadership focused on building trust, working collaboratively with civic leaders, spreading a new concept for the region that linked the environment and the economy, and helping people develop networks and become collaborative leaders.

JV:SV enlisted respected leaders to find innovative solutions to the region's economic slowdown in 1993. It relied on the strengths of the Valley, drawing in leaders from Stanford and other educational institutions as well as from its high-tech corporations. Bringing in these individuals also meant bringing in their networks, which was a familiar way of getting things done in the region. These leaders used the successful and familiar venture capital model to build a flexible organization to develop projects.

San Diego had a long-standing self-awareness as a region and a small-town approach to getting things done. In an area that was politically conservative and mistrustful of government, change often came through the work of civic-minded business leaders. The San Diego region benefited from the presence of a world-class university with historical ties to the business community. A major weakness of the region had been the failure of leaders to recognize that San Diego's economy was intertwined with Tijuana's. Accordingly, there was an institutional gap and a lack of a mechanism for coordinating the cross-border economy. Moreover, though business leaders were powerful and civic minded, they were not linked together nor did they have the knowledge they would need to address the region's problems. SDD developed a strategy well-suited to the region: convening elites, developing high-quality research to reflect on the issues they identified, and helping them instigate innovative actions by drawing on their networks of other elites.

The Bay Area is a region with diverse, well-organized, and conflicting advocacy groups and nonprofit service organizations; a strong, civic-minded business community; and a multiplicity of regional agencies, which did not communicate well among themselves. In organizing the BAASC to seek agreement across these interests, its leadership addressed a need and an institutional vacuum. There were no forums for these stakeholders to learn in a civil environment about each other's concerns. BAASC focused on smart growth and the related issues of housing and environmental protection, which were important in the Bay Area. The Alliance copied a model

from the President’s Council on Sustainable Development, which did not grow out of a specific Bay Area context and thus may have been hampered in its effectiveness.

### Uses of Research

In collaborative processes, reliable information is crucial. Three of the four CRIs built much of their work on research and information produced by one or more widely trusted sources. The fourth, BAASC, relied on very little research or data in its deliberations. This failure to use research accounts, in part, for the Alliance’s difficulties in reaching a robust agreement or in taking effective action. The strategies the other three used all involved substantial investment in research, along with dialogue to help design and make sense of the research as well as to mobilize action.

Research was a cornerstone of SBC’s strategy. The organization recognized that how they produced information mattered, as did how they disseminated it. Staff worked on the first research project, *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index*, with a diverse local advisory committee and had it reviewed by experts across the state before publication. They distributed the *Wealth Index* for discussion at a series of forums, an annual conference, and the Sierra Leadership Seminar. These dialogues gave people the chance to build shared understanding of conditions in the Sierra. It opened a conversation about sustainability and what might be done to improve it. This first foray into research was successful in giving SBC credibility, promoting its mission, and attracting regional attention. Remarkably, though SBC had an agenda, the research it produced was widely accepted as accurate. This acceptance can be explained by the transparency that the staff researchers employed in working with advisory groups and experts. Moreover, in presenting the research publicly, SBC did not use the reports as advocacy pieces but simply put them forward for discussion. SBC used versions of this research model in virtually every project.

JV:SV’s model was that research should inform action. Well-respected consultants did a study of the region to identify problems that were slowing down the economy. The two reports on this research were important in guiding JV:SV’s work and served as catalysts for many of its initiatives. One of the most successful and enduring projects has been the *Index of Silicon Valley*, which was designed as a multipurpose set of indicators rather than as a way of promoting a point of view and making an argument. It has become a highly visible part of JV:SV’s effort, and it is updated annually. Unlike SBC, however, JV:SV did not roll out its index in various forums because it represented a more conventional view of indicators—namely, a sort of analytical report card on trends. Like the SBC index, it did help create a sense of region.

SDD engaged in a dynamic process that used strategically selected research along with dialogue to increase the intellectual capital of its members. After the members decided to take on an issue, they began with a presentation—often by an expert in the field—and an active discussion. This was an iterative process that jointly shaped the topic and the members’ understanding of it. If the topic generated enough interest and funding could be secured, SDD staff generated further research analyzing the problem and considering possible remedies. They brought the results back to the membership, often highlighting a key technical insight that would transform the group’s

understanding of the problem. By this stage, SDD had used the research to reframe the problem strategically and identify a set of possible ways to approach the issue.

BAASC's theory of change was built on the idea of gathering knowledgeable and politically involved stakeholders and getting them to agree on what to do. What mattered was the knowledge and beliefs of key stakeholders, not what experts thought. Indeed, there was a sense among the leaders that collectively they had the knowledge they needed. They had been discussing smart growth, housing, and transportation issues for years in various forums and felt it was time to act. They began with working groups on various topics like growth, best practices, media outreach, and indicators. BAASC did not tap expert assistance for these groups, so the working groups gathered information themselves when they thought it necessary. BAASC had adopted a political model of change, where the kind of information needed was who wants what and who can be persuaded. BAASC remained split over key issues, which their lowest-common-denominator approach did not address.

### **CRI as Network Structures**

These CRIs were network structures, composed of loosely linked autonomous players. Participants were independent and diverse and did not follow a leader or push a shared vision. CRIs created their networks through collaborative activities and dialogue, and participants created further collaborative activities on their own, drawing others into the network. The networks were held together by the social and political capital built through the processes, and information and learning flowed through the networks. Shared knowledge and common heuristics allowed the network to work toward common purposes without central guidance or control.

The structure of each CRI's network was different. SBC built a distributed network, diffuse and extensive, starting with one-on-one conversations between staff, board members, and community leaders and going to multiway conversations in their conferences and leadership training seminars. SBC was a central node as participants reconnected for advice and assistance when they wanted to start new initiatives, and SBC turned to the network for assistance in convening people to help with projects around the region.

In SDD, the central node was the Executive Director, who selected members and worked personally with the most powerful among them. The task forces and working groups, designed to address specific issues and consider policy options, linked members to one another.

JV:SV began in a strongly networked region and built on existing social and political capital. It drew on the social networks of the president and board members to find appropriate participants throughout the region for particular tasks. Teams, which autonomously designed and implemented projects, in turn used or built community networks with governmental officials, businesspeople, and others as appropriate to the task.

BAASC was itself a network, a virtual organization, with only a quarter-time staff member and neither office nor post box. It operated entirely through partner agencies, which raised money, conducted projects, provided staff for collaborative efforts, and donated time. The leaders of these



partner organizations made up a tightly linked steering committee. While this committee made decisions consensually for the Alliance, the partner agencies remained autonomous, conducting projects and activities as they saw fit, with periodic reporting to BAASC. Memoranda of understanding, much less legal contracts spelling out obligations and decision authority, were rarely used. The caucus decision-making process built networks within each of the three stakeholder groups. It created a new political force among equity players, who had not worked together in the past.

## Outcomes

We classify CRI outcomes into three broad categories (see Table ES-2, page xii). First, there are tangible outcomes, which produce on-the-ground changes in the regions. Second, there are intangible outcomes, most of which are changes in the capacity of the regions to address their own issues. Third, there are one or more spin-off organizations from each CRI that continue to work independently.

The CRIs have also done things that have negative or minimal outcomes. They have been unsuccessful in attempts to directly change major public policy, seemingly because they are not organized to be effective at lobbying. They have not had good track records in the education arena, probably because of the differences between the business perspective and the education bureaucracy. We believe that CRIs are ongoing experiments, which are bound to make mistakes. The important thing is for a CRI to keep trying things and continually reflect on its performance, adjust, and learn.

## Conclusions and Reflections

All the CRIs we studied have, in varying ways, filled gaps in regional governance, and all have contributed to more sustainable regions. They have borne out The James Irvine Foundation's original theory of change, that collaborative efforts that engage participants from multiple sectors are more likely to produce workable solutions to challenges than business-as-usual approaches. One of the remarkable things about the CRI experiment is that the organizations lacked any sort of formal power or authority but nonetheless produced significant outcomes. They accomplished these outcomes by working with elites and local leaders and providing them with knowledge and the opportunity to apply it to their respective regions. They encouraged new ideas and supported them by linking together the players who could get things done. They also tailored their strategies and agendas to the unique characteristics, needs, and cultures of their regions.

While the variation in activities, skills, strategies, and contextual factors across the CRIs do not allow for a simple list of do's and don'ts for regional voluntary organizations, we have learned that:

- To be successful, collaborative regional organizations must be homegrown, built by those who best understand the region.
- CRI leaders who are most effective do not control the dialogue or insist on their way. They inspire, encourage, convene, and support. They build leadership in others. They train others to be collaborative leaders. They welcome innovation and embrace challenges.

- The organization's theory of change is critical to all that it does. This theory should be made explicit so it can be tested and adapted as needed. The theory of change may not be suited to all tasks, but whatever the theory is, tasks need to be feasible, clear, and manageable in scope.
- CRIs are good at many things: building regional social, intellectual, and political capital; reframing contentious issues so they can be addressed constructively; acting as a neutral convener and provider of trusted knowledge; drawing in new voices and new perspectives to address regional issues; developing innovative solutions; building regional identity; turning leaders' attention to regional sustainability; and energizing and educating civic entrepreneurs.
- CRIs have not proven effective in the political arena. CRIs' lack of success in directly influencing policy suggests that combining stakeholder collaboration with political advocacy may not work. CRIs incorporate many views in shifting and ambiguous ways, whereas advocacy requires simple messages and focused energy.
- Research plays a critical role in regional change and helping civic leaders fill governance gaps, but only if certain conditions are met. It must be produced by a trusted source. Its methods must be transparent and reviewed by stakeholders. It must be perceived as unbiased and not designed to promote a particular policy. There must be opportunity for dialogue during and after the production of the research so it can have shared meaning.
- CRIs are network structures, an emergent form of organization involving loosely linked autonomous players connected to one another in a variety of patterns. Information and social capital flow through these networks, and the participants share heuristics, feedback, and new needs and opportunities. They serve as a kind of distributed intelligence, and they can act in a self-organizing and adaptive way even without central guidance.

CRIs are experiments. Some of their efforts have been productive and some have not. Some will end while others will continue in one form or another. The learning that has taken place has changed hundreds of civic leaders and will continue to make a difference with or without the CRIs. It remains to be seen how essential the organizational and support structure of the CRIs will be to continuing to build and motivate civic leadership to improve regional performance. The evidence is that each of the CRIs has changed its region in key ways already but also that the gaps in regional governance persist. We believe the civic capacity that these CRIs have built will be the basis for whatever comes next.



Table ES-2. Filling the Governance Gap: Selected Outcomes by CRI

FEATURE	CRI			
	SBC	JV:SV	SDD	BAASC
Tangible, On-the-Ground Results	<p>Placer Legacy adopted by county. Thousands of acres preserved for habitat and open space.</p> <p>Design guidelines adopted and used for communities in Mono County.</p> <p>Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Thousands of acres preserved; millions of dollars will be available in future.</p>	<p>Smart Permit program resulting in local code amendments reduced from 400 to 11. Millions of dollars saved in construction costs and permit processing affecting 90,000 projects in 27 jurisdictions.</p> <p>Smart Valley Inc. completed information infrastructure upgrading.</p> <p>Economic development team assisted in retention and expansion of dozens of Silicon Valley firms.</p>	<p>SENTRI, a dedicated lane for frequent border crossers.</p>	<p>Seven mixed-use developments with community benefits for poor neighborhoods.</p> <p>Official regional population projections based on smart-growth principles became part of regional transportation plan.</p>
Intangible, Regional Capacity Changes	<p>Knowledge of regional issues improved through <i>Wealth Index, Planning for Prosperity</i>, and accompanying dialogue.</p> <p>170 collaborative leaders trained through Leadership Seminar.</p> <p>New regional networks created. Local government knowledge and skills increased through town planning services.</p> <p>A vision of how to achieve sustainability.</p>	<p>New networks among jurisdictions and among businesses and jurisdictions.</p> <p>Improved understanding of region through the Silicon Valley <i>Index</i> and other research.</p> <p>Increased sense of regional identity across sectors and jurisdictions.</p> <p>Developed social capital among participants, including women.</p>	<p>Improved understanding of regional issues among influential elites.</p> <p>Framed new issues for regional agenda.</p> <p>New cross-border networks and knowledge.</p> <p>Research raised level of discourse on airport options and contributed to establishment of Airport Authority.</p>	<p>Regional agencies built new relationships among themselves and with stakeholders.</p> <p>Preparation of <i>Compact</i> helped civic leaders learn about regional issues and understand stakeholders' divergent views.</p> <p>Created social equity caucus, empowering diverse groups and new voices in the region.</p>
Spin-Offs	<p>Sierra Nevada Conservancy</p> <p>Placer Legacy</p>	<p>Smart Valley Defense/Space Consortium</p> <p>Environmental Partnership</p> <p>Business Partnering Group</p> <p>Enterprise Network (All incorporated as 501(c)(6) nonprofits with independent boards and affiliates of JV:SV)</p>	<p>Tijuana Trabajo</p>	<p>Community Capital Investment Initiative</p>
Minimal, None, or Negative	<p>Natural Heritage 2020 in Nevada County, designed to copy Placer Legacy.</p> <p>Effort to mediate major development dispute in Martis Valley.</p>	<p>Challenge 2000, collaborative education reform.</p> <p>Other initiatives that could not get adequate support to move forward.</p>	<p>Education Initiative; efforts to take political action.</p> <p>SDD-facilitated agreement on quality-of-life coalition for sales tax allocation ignored by SANDAG.</p>	<p><i>Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area</i>.</p> <p>Footprint for development.</p> <p>Regional indicators report.</p>

# The James Irvine Foundation's Collaborative Regional Initiatives Program

## PROGRAM PURPOSES AND THEORY

From 1997 to 2004, The James Irvine Foundation (Irvine) invested more than \$20 million in grants to support Collaborative Regional Initiatives (CRIs), partnerships that engaged Californians from public, private, and nonprofit sectors in most of the state's major regions. These CRIs all emerged from collaborative processes involving diverse stakeholders. They varied in their origins, focus, and outcomes—each emerged from its region's unique challenges, and each addressed these in different ways. Across the group, they dealt with at least three of four major types of issues: (1) natural resource protection, (2) workforce and economic development, (3) regional infrastructure development, and (4) civic engagement.

The overarching goals of Irvine's CRI program were to enhance economic vitality, increase social equity, and protect the natural environment of California regions over the long term through strategic, collaborative action by business, community, and government leadership. The effort was part of Irvine's Sustainable Communities program, the purpose of which was to help California accommodate growth in a way that benefited the economy, the environment, and all levels of its diverse population. In 2003, Irvine restructured its strategic approach to grantmaking and no longer has a separate Sustainable Communities program. However, some of its goals are now a part of Irvine's California Perspectives program, which seeks to inform public understanding, engage Californians, and improve decision-making on significant issues of long-term consequence to the state.

The theory of change behind the CRI program was that collaborative efforts, which engage participants from multiple sectors, are more likely to produce workable solutions to California's challenges than a business-as-usual approach. To move toward sustainable regions, participants must start from the premise that all three E's (environment, equity, and economy) are fundamentally entwined and must be addressed jointly. Many of the sustainability challenges can only be understood and addressed in regional contexts and not simply through sectoral agencies or interests and local jurisdictions. Moreover, successful change requires informed and engaged citizens who understand what is at stake, what the choices are, and how to contribute to better decisions. Irvine therefore supported organizations that crossed sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries, addressed complex regional issues related to sustainability, and worked with and mobilized diverse participants to improve regional performance. In addition, Irvine and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation created the California Center for Regional Leadership (CCRL), to help build knowledge and networks among the CRIs. CCRL held annual Civic Entrepreneur Summits, where leaders from the CRIs met and learned from experts and from one another.

## THE STUDY

The assessment team's research began with a survey and review of the goals, structure, and activities of 17 CRIs. The team soon concluded that in order to understand what had happened, why, and how, it would need to conduct in-depth case studies of selected CRIs. The team chose the oldest, most complex, and best developed of the CRIs with the greatest diversity of activities: Sierra Business Council (SBC), Joint Venture: Silicon Valley (JV:SV), San Diego Dialogue (SDD), and Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities (BAASC). These CRIs differed in their approaches and purposes and offered a range of strategies and outcomes to compare. They had all been in place long enough to have had accomplishments and produced changes in their regions. The assessment team looked at each of these CRIs as a whole rather than focusing solely on activities funded by Irvine. Irvine funding served as seed, project, and general support money, but all CRIs supplemented it with other grants and funding sources. This assessment was originally designed to compare successes and failures of projects completed by the CRIs. Accordingly, the team began with hypotheses about the resources needed for success, the mix of stakeholders, processes and information, and how the origins of a CRI and its framing of the issues were factors. After a year of interviews and analysis, the team realized, however, that contexts and strategies for each CRI were so different, projects so diverse, and the degree of success for any one project so ambiguous that this analytic strategy was not going to be fruitful. The team prepared an in-depth report on each of the four cases, laying out its strategies and organization, activities, successes, and failures, and the way each adapted to its region's strengths and needs.<sup>1</sup> Each offered a different model for regional collaboration, and each offered different insights about what CRIs can accomplish, what works well, and what can go wrong. The purpose of this paper is to describe the themes and lessons from a comparison of these cases and to highlight what is important and new about these experiments in regional action and governance.

## KEY FINDINGS

All the CRIs have taken on the task of creating and mobilizing civic entrepreneurs in their regions to help fill gaps in regional governance. At the regional level, only narrowly focused sectoral public agencies operated, leaving a gap where problems cut across sectors. The dozens of local jurisdictions in a region normally had neither the incentive nor the forums in which to address problems and opportunities that affected them jointly. Existing advocacy organizations or alliances among civic leaders were not diverse in their membership and tended to address narrow issues.

1. These reports include *Creating and Sustaining Regional Collaboration in Silicon Valley: The Case of Joint Venture: Silicon Valley* by AnnaLee Saxenian and Nadya Chinoy Dabby; *The San Diego Dialogue: Reshaping the San Diego Region* by Karen Christensen and Jane Rongerude; *Taking the Three E's Seriously: The Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities* by Judith Innes; and *Turning Businesspeople into Environmentalists: The Sierra Business Council* by Judith Innes and Gerardo Sandoval. All of these reports may be found at <http://www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/pub/cri-titles.htm>.

In most regions, no organization was actively addressing sustainability as a broadly significant issue. CRIs were able to address this “governance gap” by actively building civic capacity.

**Five Features of CRIs**

The assessment team concluded that five features of CRIs are most critical in understanding how they function: 1) the CRI’s theory of change, 2) leadership style, 3) regional fit, 4) use of research, and 5) network structure (see Table 1). These features account, to a considerable degree, for the CRIs’ successes and limitations and demonstrate that there are many ways to approach these kinds of regional tasks. Indeed, the four CRIs studied differed significantly in all five comparatives, and each CRI addressed a different mix of issues, as indicated in Table 2.

**Table 1. Five Features of Collaborative Regional Initiatives: A Comparison**

FEATURE	CRI			
	SBC	JV:SV	SDD	BAASC
Theory of Change	Research and dialogue	Venture capital model	Educating elites	Political coalition
Leadership Style	Listening, convening, collaborating	Connecting to social networks	Personal relationships	Shared decision-making
Regional Fit	Linking economy and environment	Building on regional economic success	Building on small-town style	Convening advocacy groups
Use of Research	Integral to promoting mission and gaining credibility	Building regional identity and measuring progress	Building shared knowledge	Limited and marginal
Network Structure	Distributed, widely dispersed	Teams loosely linked to core	Central node linked to networks	Five-node core with satellite caucuses

**Table 2. Types of Issues Addressed by Each CRI**

ISSUE TYPE	CRI			
	SBC	JV:SV	SDD	BAASC
Natural Resource Protection	X		X	X
Workforce and Economic Development	X	X	X	X
Regional Infrastructure Development		X	X	X
Civic Engagement	X	X	X	X

The theories of change implicit in their activities were each unique, reflecting the different strategies of their early leadership. These theories, which became embedded in the organizations’ practices, accounted to a considerable extent for the organizations’ degree of effectiveness. Their leadership was collaborative and dispersed, rather than directive or contained within a single

person, as CRI participants jointly developed agendas and practices. Leaders proliferated as a result of their joint work. Each CRI's strategies, framing of issues, and agendas were tailored to its region's particular political culture and needs. Three of the four CRIs made research central to their change strategy, though it played a very different role in each. Finally, CRIs are fundamentally flexible network organizations involving many autonomous players linked by shared understandings and social and political capital. These players are part of the CRI's distributed intelligence systems in which much gets accomplished in a self-organizing, adaptive way without central guidance other than the common vision that participants share.

The assessment team found that CRIs had tangible outcomes such as land protected from development in the Sierra and a new streamlined permitting program in Silicon Valley; intangible outcomes, primarily in building civic capacity in the regions; spin-off organizations that continue working independently of the CRI; and a few failed projects. They were least successful when they tried to directly change public policy through political action or when they engaged in educational reform and most successful when they sought to influence through research, education, and dialogue. These outcomes are detailed at the end of this report and are summarized in Table 3 (see page 37).

Overall, CRIs are experiments, and they have been working through trial and error. They have required substantial time and effort from many volunteers and resources provided by a variety of funders, cooperating agencies, and donors. There is no way to accurately document these resources, as even the players themselves cannot account for all they have contributed. There is also no way to directly compare the results of these efforts to what they would have been if more conventional methods had been used, such as traditional political advocacy or grassroots mobilization. However, according to the assessment team, many, if not most, of the outcomes would not have happened before the CRI was in place and, moreover, would have been unlikely to emerge from conventional processes because they are fundamentally products of dialogue and cooperation.

## PROFILES OF THE FOUR CRIs

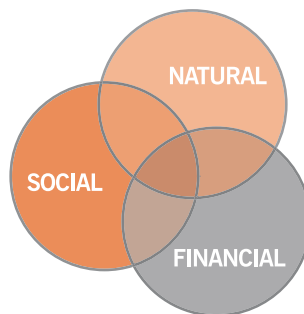
### The Sierra Business Council (SBC)

SBC was established in 1994, when environmental activist Lucy Blake conceived the idea of creating an organization of Sierra businesspeople who would understand the role of the natural beauty of the Sierra in their business success. Her hope was that this organization would help to change the conflictual political culture, which was characterized by a split between conservative, property-rights enthusiasts and environmental advocates. The long-term, rural old-timers and small businesspeople were often pitted against new residents from urban areas who came for the quality of life. Traditional, extractive industry was on the wane, and the tourist and ski industries were growing. Major development was underway—popular with some and alarming to others.

This far-flung region had little regional political infrastructure or organization. People in its small towns were addressing common issues but without much communication or mutual assistance.

Blake enlisted a board and hundreds of businesspeople as members and began by talking one-on-one with dozens of leaders from various sectors in the region about their concerns and hopes. With foundation funding, SBC began several initiatives, starting with research and dissemination of ideas. Its first project was the *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index*, which measured aspects of the region's performance along the three overlapping dimensions of sustainability—natural, financial, and social capital—that the report illustrated with a simple Venn diagram (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. SBC's Capital Investment Diagram<sup>2</sup>



SBC staff organized forums and dialogues with community leaders to explain and explore the meaning and implications of the indicators for the region. The *Wealth Index* has been widely used, and it created a demand for parallel indexes for subregions. The second project was *Planning for Prosperity*, a document that presented simply framed land use planning principles for civic leaders, supported by examples from around the country. Again, SBC used forums, dialogues, and conferences to discuss the practicalities of these ideas. The next project, Placer Legacy, built in part on this document as SBC staff worked quietly and collaboratively with Placer County elected officials and staff to create a science-based program for protecting habitat and open space while simultaneously assembling the necessary political support. The planning department focused on these issues, and the county began raising money to buy land. SBC continues to partner with the county as it implements this project.

SBC has conducted other major projects including a popular program in Town Planning Services, offering expert assistance, community organizing, and facilitation to towns in the region that were dealing with growth issues. The Working Landscapes program has educated farmers and ranchers in how to sell conservation easements while they continue to work their land. As of 2004, it had resulted in the preservation of more than 25,000 acres of land. Staff worked collaboratively

2. *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index: Understanding and Tracking our Region's Wealth*. 1999–2000 edition. Sierra Business Council, Truckee CA. p. 9. (<http://www.sbcouncil.org/publications.asp>).

for five years with environmental organizations, ranchers, and state officials and succeeded in creating a statewide Sierra Nevada Conservancy, which will allow significant new funding to go into preserving and restoring Sierra lands. SBC sponsors an annual Sierra Leadership Seminar that trains civic leaders from all sectors in collaborative methods of problem-solving and provides an important network for SBC's work. It links people from around the region, and participants say it has built their confidence, taught them useful skills, and helped them to understand others' experiences. SBC holds dialogues and forums for the region and individual counties at their request on issues of importance to the Sierra. It also holds an increasingly popular regionwide annual conference, which helps to promote their vision, build participants' skills, share knowledge, and create networks of leaders interested in sustainability.

Overall, SBC has been highly successful in instigating change, spreading deeper and broader understanding among regional leaders, and building a sense of region. Outcomes include thousands of acres of land protected and hundreds of civic leaders with new skills and knowledge, networked and engaged in joint action for a sustainable region. SBC has worked with communities to develop goals, design guidelines, and redevelopment strategies. They did have some missteps, such as their effort to import the Placer Legacy into Nevada County instead of working with residents to develop their own strategy. From this mistake, SBC learned the importance of careful groundwork and unique solutions. Lucy Blake left SBC, and the new president focused on building organizational systems and staffing to better organize the agency's work. This president has also moved on, and SBC hired a new president in spring 2005.

### **Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network (JV:SV)**

JV:SV describes itself as “a dynamic, new model of regional rejuvenation.” It began in 1993 as a response to an economic downturn in Silicon Valley. The region's high-tech business leaders were worried that Silicon Valley was losing its competitive edge and, under the leadership of executives Tom Hayes and Jim Morgan, began a collaborative process to analyze the problem and implement solutions. There was tremendous support for this process, with the initial organizing meeting attracting approximately 1,000 members of the business community. Many at the time saw the problem of keeping the Valley's competitive edge as important to the entire region, but Silicon Valley had no institutions of regional governance. If they were going to make things better for the Valley, they knew they needed to fill this gap. As a first step, they hired the consulting firm SRI International to conduct a strategic regional audit that helped to identify some of the region's problems and mobilize interest in solving them.<sup>3</sup> They published the results of the audit in a report called *Economy at Risk*, which discussed the major long-term challenges the Valley faced along with 14 warning signs about the Valley's future.

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3. Later the consultants left SRI to form a separate organization, Collaborative Economics, so they could continue to be available to provide support for JV:SV and similar initiatives.



Next, Hayes and Morgan began to work collaboratively with other regional leaders, seeking input from residents and businesses about what Silicon Valley needed to do to strengthen its economy. This data was released in an important report called *Blueprint for a 21st Century Community*. The *Blueprint* established 13 working groups around industry and infrastructure themes, and the working groups identified opportunities to address these issues. Finally, they set up JV:SV to spearhead this effort for change and to support implementation of the ideas presented in the *Blueprint*. These included developing specialized infrastructure, reducing the cost of doing business, retaining and expanding existing infrastructure, and supporting the growth of new industry.

The founders of JV:SV structured the organization as a network with a small central core, with connections to projects and consultants. The core included their CEO, a few staff, and the JV:SV Board of Directors, which consisted of 25 to 30 Silicon Valley business, government, education, and community leaders, who met five times a year.

JV:SV did much of its work following the venture capital model. In this model, new ideas were important. An idea became a project or an initiative if it was interesting and timely enough to generate support. Projects came in all shapes and sizes, ranging from short-term pilot projects carried out by one person to multiyear initiatives with budgets in the thousands of dollars that required additional staff and even office space. JV:SV encouraged a regional focus, innovative solutions, and tangible results. New ideas came from staff people, board members, and community members. If the ideas found support within the organization's core, then a relationship would be established linking the project with JV:SV by means of a Memorandum of Understanding, shared staff, or shared office space. Different projects had different relationships with the core of JV:SV; not all ties were of equal strength. In many cases, an initiative became independent, governed by its own board or council, although it remained connected to the core of JV:SV through overlapping of participants with the JV:SV board and through the flow of resources. Initiatives were responsible on their own for succeeding or failing.

Community leaders initially met JV:SV with skepticism. Its leaders had to convince the people of Silicon Valley that they had the region's best interests at heart and that they were not just another self-interested business group. Hiring state senator Becky Morgan as President and CEO was helpful in that regard. She was a familiar figure, widely respected, and trusted in the region. Soon JV:SV's efforts began to speak for themselves. Its initiatives ranged from streamlining local regulatory processes to supporting the expansion of startup companies to creating a venture capital fund to support education in the region. These projects varied in their activities, participant types, resources, and overall outcomes. Soon the initiatives began to catch the attention of the public and to show tangible results.

JV:SV's projects have been numerous and varied. Examples include the:

- Healthy Community-Healthy Economy Initiative, which ran from 1993 through 1999 and oversaw the Healthy Workforce Project, the Health and Human Services Information System, and the Healthy Children at School Project



- Silicon Valley Environmental Partnership, which began in 1993 and produces periodic index reports on environmental conditions in Silicon Valley
- Defense/Space Consortium, which began in 1993 and published a report titled *Silicon Valley Defense Transition Strategy* in 1995 and then merged with the Global Trading Center project to become the Business Partnering Group
- Enterprise Network, a venture accelerator and resource center, which spun off in 1996
- Council on Tax and Fiscal Policy Case Study, the Semiconductor Industry Working Group and the New Business Formation Working Group, which joined together in 1994 to become the Economic Development Team
- 21st Century Education Initiative—including Challenge 2000, its major K–12 project—which began in 1994 and ended in 2000
- Smart Valley Initiative, with more than 20 initiatives, the best-known of which is the Smart Permit program that facilitated development through technology

One of JV:SV's most important contributions has been its annual *Index of Silicon Valley*. This report, which is released amidst a whirl of media attention each year, provides readable, accessible information about the region's performance. The report includes a range of social and economic indicators of trends regarding the region's economy and quality of life. It is useful for diverse constituencies, covers a wide array of topics, and presents data that are objective and consistent, providing a common framework for understanding issues affecting the Valley.

JV:SV has successfully engaged regional leaders from multiple sectors in collaborative work designed to keep Silicon Valley economically strong. These collaborative efforts have produced tangible results, increasing regional capacities and changing practices within the region. They have helped develop Silicon Valley's regional identity; they have built social capital among their members, particularly women; and they have contributed to the growing use of research to inform action in Silicon Valley.

When Morgan stepped down as JV:SV's CEO, she was replaced by board member Ruben Barrales. Unfortunately, this transition was not successful, and Barrales did not stay long as the CEO of JV:SV. There was a lengthy search for a successor, and the ultimate choice was Russell Hancock, a political scientist who had been a lecturer in public policy at Stanford and former Vice President of the Bay Area Council. Hancock has maintained a low profile and continued many of the existing projects, such as the Silicon Valley *Index*, while seeking to rebuild a wider constituency among the business community. The board of JV:SV no longer includes the high-profile business executives that characterized the Becky Morgan era. It is currently a more diverse group of leaders, drawing from universities, local government, and nonprofit organizations, along with local service providers from banks, accounting firms, and other businesses. This new mix of people is likely to lead the organization in new ways though, as yet, it is too soon to say how.

## San Diego Dialogue (SDD)

SDD originated through a high-tech business network called UCSD CONNECT. Mary Walshok, Dean of the Division of Extended Studies and Public Programs at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), started CONNECT in the mid-1980s as a way to link high-technology and life science entrepreneurs with industry-specific expertise, university resources, and targeted support services for accelerating growth in San Diego. The program successfully linked old- and new-economy leaders and incubated high-tech small businesses in San Diego, but it did not generate the new civic leaders the region needed. In the early 1990s, a handful of CONNECT members approached Walshok for assistance. They believed that if San Diego was to be competitive in the future, the region needed leaders who would look beyond the traditional scope of economic development to address issues such as infrastructure, schools, and housing. Walshok's solution was SDD: a self-organizing, semi-autonomous body within UCSD's Extended Studies Division that would bring together leading citizens to create a regional knowledge base and catalyst for change.

Walshok hired Charles Nathanson to be SDD's Executive Director, and together they began to recruit scholars, business leaders, media representatives, educators, and cultural and civic leaders who were reputed to be regionally focused and civic minded. They assembled the new wealth and intelligence of San Diego as well as the old, with participants ranging from executives of high-tech companies like Qualcomm to real estate developers and university presidents. They started with small dinner meetings with speakers and discussions of challenges facing the region. Early efforts focused on educating members and building a common conception of the region rather than on identifying specific problems or solutions. Participants soon changed their perception of the boundaries of the region. They realized that San Diego did not stop at the border, but that the region included Tijuana, Mexico, as well. This new cross-border regional identity became a core of the Dialogue's work and is a foundation for its continuing contributions.

SDD had a staff almost as large as SBC's, with an Executive Director, a Research Director, a Chief of Staff, a Director of Events and Special Projects, a smart-growth program assistant, and several support people. Funding for the Dialogue came primarily from foundations and individual donations, with occasional support from UCSD. Dialogue membership was by invitation only. Its more than 150 members included many of San Diego's elite, people with influence and access to decision makers and other influential people in the region. These members connected SDD to a powerful regional network. The Dialogue concept was that it could create regional change through engaging and educating this network.

From the beginning, SDD's agenda was strategic, linking the interests of its carefully selected members within an issue framework of smart growth, education, and cross-border development. Its work was removed from the political process, at least until it became involved in education. SDD chose its topics carefully, concentrating on medium-sized, concrete issues important to the well-being of the region but which had not become mired in controversy. Its approach to regional change began with dialogues that brought together civic-minded, influential people to discuss a topic of regional importance. Next, SDD conducted in-depth research that analyzed the perceived

problems and sought to reframe them in positive, workable terms. Border crossing, for instance, became an issue of commerce, not immigration; planning regional growth came to mean ensuring space for one's grandchildren, not building high-rises for newcomers. SDD then discussed the research, identified solutions, and disseminated the findings. In the end, it handed the problem off to policymakers, advocates, and elected officials who could implement the solutions. Working from this model, SDD was able to frame the discourse and shape the regional agenda on topics such as cross-border commerce, educational reform, airport planning, regional smart growth, and water supply infrastructure.

The quintessential SDD issue was the San Diego/Tijuana border. After SDD members realized that San Diego was a binational region, they created an advisory committee to address cross-border affairs. The committee's chair proposed a study of who crossed the border, and they found that most of the traffic consisted of frequent crossers. Using this information, the Dialogue reframed the regional conversation, making the border an issue of commerce rather than immigration. Then they put their findings into a report, which they distributed widely, even taking advantage of the Republican National Convention to disseminate their views to a national audience. They also took their findings to Washington, D.C., and played an important role in starting the SENTRI program, which provides a dedicated lane for frequent crossers to and from Tijuana. Finally, their research provided a framework for discussing other issues that needed to be addressed at a binational level, such as water, energy, health care, manufacturing, and security at ports of entry.

After firmly establishing a dialogue, SDD took two additional steps to help shape a regional understanding of the border. First, it created the Forum Fronterizo, a venue where different parties interested in cross-border work could come together to discuss issues related to regional policy. Each discussion included a briefing paper that was distributed first at a Forum session and then to other strategically chosen individuals. The Forum offered several public meetings a year, as well as small committee meetings where carefully selected participants were able to help develop topics and spend time with elected officials. Through the Forum, the Dialogue offered a discreet and private setting for discussion along with materials for educating the people who could make changes happen. Second, SDD inspired Tijuana Trabaja, a membership-based civic organization in Tijuana. Most of SDD's Mexican members served on the board of Tijuana Trabaja where they addressed issues similar to those addressed by the Dialogue, but maintained a Tijuana focus. These individuals were fully engaged in the cross-border nature of the San Diego/Tijuana region. They were the critical members of the SDD network, able to make strategic alliances that spanned the border and directly connect San Diego's business leaders to the business leaders in Tijuana.

Because of the organization's association with a public university, SDD was not able to engage directly in advocacy. Their model of conducting research and convening dialogue served them well enough that most staff and members were content with the scope of their activities. It was not until the Dialogue became involved in the issue of education that Nathanson began exploring whether SDD should become a more directly political organization. SDD's concern with

education dated back to its charter, but it stayed out of San Diego schools until the early 2000s, when the school district needed a new Superintendent. The selection committee, which included two important Dialogue members, hired Alan Bersin, a lawyer from the U.S. Attorney General's office and a close personal friend of Nathanson. Bersin took his post in 1998 and brought with him a controversial plan for reform that the teacher's union, and many in the community, immediately opposed. From the Dialogue's point of view, Bersin had a very important reform agenda and he needed their help to make it happen.

Consistent with the Dialogue model, the first step was research. The Dialogue produced several reports focused on inequalities in school outcomes, which identified two important and interrelated problems: teacher turnover and an achievement gap. One Dialogue study showed that in the San Diego Unified School District, 30 percent to 40 percent of the teachers at a single school could be new each year. They found that teachers were leaving because they could not be teachers. They did not have support systems to help them teach, and they ended up providing other needed services to students instead. The Dialogue's next step was unusual for the organization. Rather than let another organization use the research to implement solutions, Nathanson partnered with The California Endowment and started a pilot project putting a health and social services program in one of the San Diego schools with high teacher turnover. He hoped the pilot project would provide evidence to justify expanding the program to the entire school system.

The Dialogue saw the limitations of its approach while trying to address the achievement gap. First, it convened "Partners for K-12 School Reform," a group cochaired by the president of San Diego State University and State Senator Dede Alpert. This group reached beyond Dialogue membership and became a countywide collaboration comprising superintendents, union leaders, school board members, and representatives of the County Office of Education, in addition to civic and business leaders. The theme became "How to Close the Achievement Gap for Poor and Minority Children." Staff organized the Learning Curve, a series of free public forums on achievement issues with respected experts. These dialogues brought together a broad range of people (usually 150 to 300) connected to education in San Diego and allowed them to talk to each other, which many had never done. All of this was typical of the Dialogue approach. However, Nathanson saw the initiative as a moral issue and a crusade for the public at large to close the achievement gap, and he wanted to see the Superintendent's reforms fully embraced in San Diego. Using publications, op-ed pieces, and community forums, the Dialogue began aggressively promoting the research findings and its views on possible solutions. However, the controversy only grew, eventually spilling over into school board elections. The situation became so politicized that the Dialogue could not continue its work on the project. Despite national recognition for his reforms, Bersin was eventually asked to leave his position as Superintendent.

By the end of our study, no one had convened the members since Nathanson's death in 2003. The Dialogue did not hire a new Executive Director, and today it is reduced to only a few staff. Dean Walshok, the visionary behind the Dialogue, has been asked once again to assume its leadership. She has been refocusing the organization on the area where it is best known: cross-

border work. Walshok does not share Nathanson's single-minded concentration on the region's elite, and as a result, the SDD approach may look different in the future. SDD is already involved in a binational public health initiative as well as a project to train community leaders. Of SDD's previous projects, only the Forum Fronterizo appears likely to continue as a means for connecting San Diego's leaders to a binational regional agenda.

### **The Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities (BAASC)**

In 1997, a small group of civic leaders representing the three E's began the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities. Inspired by the President's Council for Sustainable Development, Sierra Club, and Pacific Gas and Electric, leaders enlisted the Bay Area Council, representing business; Urban Habitat, representing environmental justice and equity; and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), representing regional agencies. Leaders of this group became a steering committee, which worked collaboratively to make decisions. The Alliance had 45 members representing nonprofit organizations, all involved in promoting one or more of the three E's, and regional agencies. The steering committee set up BAASC to run with a quarter-time executive director as its only dedicated staff. Steering committee members' agencies worked as partners, providing additional staff, raising funds, and implementing projects.

BAASC's tacit mission was to change the patterns and practices of land use in the region to achieve a more compact, transit-friendly form of growth, which these leaders equated with sustainability. Some leaders conceived of their mission more broadly as changing the institutions and practices that determine regional land use. Early on, the Alliance agreed on tasks to be performed and structured the membership into four caucuses representing each of the three E's and government. The caucus chairs were the members of the steering committee. Much of the discussion took place within caucuses, which took positions collectively on the issues when they could agree. At quarterly membership meetings the steering committee gave out information and received feedback. Discussions in the steering committee were often contentious, but the group kept to a standard of getting agreement among representatives of all three E's for whatever it did. After a year of mutual education, the Alliance set up working groups of members and others to work out how to go about their planned tasks—developing a vision, designing a footprint for development, and creating a set of sustainability indicators and best practices. By 1999, they were beginning work on the Community Capital Investment Initiative (CCII), designed to bring investment into disadvantaged neighborhoods.

What BAASC did to produce its vision, *The Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area*, was to make lists of desirable goals and practices, circulate them among members, and then modify them in response, typically making them more general and deleting those that some players did not like. The Compact was not the result of an inquiry into the issues of sustainability nor was it a vision, but a list of do's and don'ts and desirable goals. Development took about three years as stakeholders argued without resolution over such issues as how much growth could and should be accommodated and where, and over whether infill housing would be sufficient or whether

significant housing on the suburban fringe would be needed. Their strategy led to a lowest-common-denominator result but worked well from a political perspective. All stakeholders were able to get something into the *Compact* that they liked and eliminate things they did not, and thus most were able to support it. The document did not include an implementation plan, however, and this became a problem when the Alliance tried to move forward. Many of the implementers were to be public agencies and local governments that had not been directly involved in developing the agreement. Thus, the process did not involve key stakeholders who were needed to assure results.

BAASC's original plan to produce a footprint for development was transformed when the regional agencies received a large grant to develop smart-growth scenarios for the Bay Area. BAASC joined forces with the agencies on a project that ultimately brought hundreds of people to dozens of workshops around the Bay Area to choose their preferred land-use patterns. Consultants and staff condensed these into a preferred scenario, which ABAG then adopted as a basis for its official population projections. Many agencies and local governments depended on the projections for basic investment and regulation decisions, most notably the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Indicators were part of the *Compact*, and BAASC published a separate indicators report in 2003, distributed it in limited numbers, and posted it on their Web site.

The Community Capital Investment Initiative (CCII) began when the Bay Area Council, with support from Irvine, started raising millions of dollars from investors for real estate development in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The promise was that investments would meet a “double bottom line,” with market-rate returns for investors and benefits for the community. The management of the CCII involved a community council (CC), a business council, and three investment funds with different purposes and rules. The CC developed community benefit criteria, and the fund managers selected projects and made investment decisions. The CC objected to the first investment, arguing it was not in a neighborhood as it was on an airport access road with no residential area. Moreover, the CC contended, it might have been built without the funds. As of 2004, one investment had met all the community benefit criteria. Others in the works met some of the criteria. The need of business for speed and confidentiality in making investments and the community desire for transparency and thorough dialogue caused inevitable conflict. “Market rate of return” seemed too high to the community people, and the business community has needed more help in choosing neighborhood investments than the CC has been able to offer. Learning has taken place on both sides, however. CCII is a work in progress as participants seek to build a new type of working institution that will be sustainable.

In the course of its work, BAASC held regional forums, including its membership meetings, to promote an integrated approach to development for the region. It has brought together hundreds of leaders with differing interests and helped them learn about each other's values and concerns and develop respect for others' views. It has drawn in people who were not previously engaged in the issue of sustainability. It has contributed to building a shared discourse around growth issues, policies, and practices among civic leaders and activists in each of the three sectors. It created the Social Equity Caucus, a group of many small organizations promoting equity and environmental justice that had not been organized as a group and individually had not played significant roles in



the region. This caucus is increasingly developing a strong collective regional voice. Other outcomes included new social networks and relationships among competing stakeholders who have worked together on projects at the intersections of the shared interests they have discovered. A 1997 meeting of the five regional agencies under the auspices of BAASC was the first of its kind, and it opened the door to cooperation on other fronts. Lines of communication are more open among stakeholders and representatives of regional agencies. Participants have developed political capital among themselves, allowing them to speak with a common public voice on some growth and housing issues. Two of the principal leaders have gone on to major posts in state government and the Ford Foundation, to which they have brought ideas developed in BAASC. The CCII is a significant innovation and experiment that could become a nationwide model for improving investment in disadvantaged neighborhoods without causing gentrification. It is unique and ambitious in its effort to achieve the double bottom line and do so with cooperative governance from both the community and the business side.

BAASC's overall record of achievements is mixed, however. It has not produced the concrete, on-the-ground outcomes (as opposed to the changes in knowledge, attitudes, discourse, and political capital noted above) that were anticipated, other than the CCII projects. Efforts to influence legislation at the state and local levels have not borne fruit. The *Compact* is made up of lowest-common-denominator concepts that remain vague. Expressions of support by jurisdictions were fraught with caveats and, overall, cannot be said to represent real commitments. The Alliance's work is not recognized by a larger public. The indicators do not appear to have had an impact, particularly since BAASC has not had sufficient funding to use them for educational efforts as planned. The Alliance forums and meetings have mostly preached to the converted and have not had a wide impact on public opinion. Some participants have felt that the Economy caucus, particularly the Bay Area Council, has dominated the BAASC and that there has not been real equality among the three E's. CCII critics have argued that the projects do not provide adequate benefits to disadvantaged neighborhoods and that, as yet, there has not been enough influence from community members. BAASC, of course, had grand ambitions, perhaps more than were realistic to achieve in a few years, so this mixed record must be looked at in that light.

Today, most of the original leaders of BAASC have moved on, including the Executive Director, and with cutbacks in foundation funding, its future remains uncertain. The organization still holds meetings, including educational efforts around smart growth, and the CCII continues to invest in projects, but most other activities are in hiatus. It remains unclear whether this CRI has produced significant change. It has stuck to its original objectives and, as yet, has neither adapted to new conditions nor determined how to carry forward this original agenda.

### **CRI<sub>s</sub> AS MODELS FOR FILLING GAPS IN REGIONAL GOVERNANCE**

The CRIs represent a significant innovation in regional governance worthy of attention, not only in California, but also across the country. They have helped to fill gaps in regional governance in

several ways. Most regions lack organizations and forums where the region as a whole can be the focus. CRIs have provided the opportunity to build a shared sense of region, along with a common agenda for action. The CRIs have confronted these challenges in creative ways suited to their differing regional contexts. While they differ in many respects, they have important features in common. They have all a flexible, networked form, diversity of participants, and a focus on sustainability. They have all built civic capacity among local leaders. CRIs' flexible networks incorporated players whose energies had not been previously tapped, and thus they have allowed for development and implementation of innovations and strategies for which no public agency had the breadth, creativity, or flexibility. Ordinary governance practices emphasize sectoral concerns or localized issues within jurisdictions, but CRIs bridge sectors and localities. Ultimately, CRIs do what public agencies and ordinary legislative practices do not: help to build knowledge, commitment, and motivation among a substantial set of regional leaders who, in turn, can form the basis of a robust regional civil society.

### **Institutions in Motion**

CRIs are institutions in constant evolution, characterized by networks, flows of information and energy, and distributed intelligence among a wide range of participants. A CRI can be highly flexible and adaptive to new problems and opportunities, for example, setting up working groups with players appropriate to tasks and disbanding them when they are finished. CRIs are not hierarchical organizations with a leader setting a vision and directing action, but loosely linked players who build shared goals, practices, and heuristics through dialogue and teamwork. The CRIs are grounded in Irvine's fundamental premise for this undertaking: that collaboration is central to successful regional action. Collaboration as a core principle for making decisions and conducting daily activities means that the organization's output cannot be controlled or even predicted. Collaborative processes have their own dynamic. They have the advantage that the many players bring differing knowledge and perspectives, along with up-to-date input about conditions in the region. Resulting strategies can fail or be more robust than those emerging from hierarchical organizations. The group dynamics of collaborative dialogues can, and in many cases do, produce valuable innovations for the regions.

This collaborative dynamic is also critical to engaging the energy of players to carry on their own efforts on behalf of the regional community. CRIs are supported to varying degrees by staff and external funding, but much of the "person power" is donated. These volunteers became committed to the mission in large part because of the dialogue that is central to all the CRIs. This dialogue allows for mutual learning and building of shared purpose, which in turn energizes the participants and has created a kind of distributed intelligence. CRIs are adaptive organizations in which participants learn how to act on their own, or with others who represent opposing interests, to achieve common goals. This is an institutional form that both builds and builds on civic capacity.



## Diversity of Goals and Participants

Elites in many cities have long operated as city boosters, working together to improve local economies. They typically form a small network that includes business leaders, developers, government officials, and others who focus on promoting growth and the development of infrastructure in the commercial urban core. While they may reach out to others in their efforts, their network remains highly informal and focused on development. CRIs have something in common with these elite networks, but they are broader in their makeup, more fluid in their membership, and more diverse in their goals and activities. This diversity is a hallmark of CRIs and sets them apart from most existing government and nongovernmental organizations. CRIs, while still deeply grounded in the business community, focus on a wider range of issues and formally incorporate a broader range of civic leaders—professional service providers and nonprofit organizations in some cases, environmental leaders and social equity advocates in others, and publishers, scholars, and educators in others. They include players from throughout a region rather than from the central city. They work with many levels of government and engage organizations and individuals with a variety of backgrounds as partners and collaborators. In the SDD case, they reached across national boundaries to include people from another country. They include women and people of color, whose voices differ from those in the old network and who contribute new insights and issues. While none of the CRIs engaged the grassroots or broad public, they often included what one of our respondents called the “grasstops”—those who speak for the less organized and inchoate public. The CRIs engaged people who were already leaders in the community, in business, and in government and created dialogues among them designed to generate new ideas and diverse support for implementing them.

## Regional Sustainability and the Governance Gap

Sustainability became a popular watchword in the 1990s, though it was more talked about than acted on, with implications that remain in contention. While CRIs did not always talk about sustainability, much less agree on what it meant, they did recognize that it involved joint attention to the economy, environment, and quality of life and in some cases to the welfare of the most disadvantaged groups. They saw these issues as linked and typically carried out actions and projects that addressed more than one of the E’s at a time. Even more to the point, they shared the idea that sustainability could only be achieved by operating at a regional scale. They did this not solely because of Irvine’s funding under its Sustainable Communities program but also because of convictions that grew among participants as they learned about the issues and their region. They realized that their objectives—whether they were workforce development, infrastructure development, or education—were regional in scale and could not be solved within individual cities.

The regions CRIs defined for themselves varied considerably in size and complexity. JV:SV represented only the “region” from south of San Francisco to San Jose; BAASC ostensibly represented the entire Bay Area, though in practice they mainly addressed East Bay issues; SDD represented one county, albeit one that contained both central city and suburbs; and SBC

represented an area 400 miles long containing parts of 18 counties. All addressed constituencies much larger than a single city. This scope was one of the many ways they addressed a governance gap.

The focus on regional sustainability also filled a gap because this issue was not addressed in other forums. Typically a few environmental organizations were concerned with sustainability, but they had a much narrower view of what it meant. Moreover, no regional public agencies had sustainability as a mission, and very little coordination or joint action occurred among jurisdictions to assure sustainability. The CRIs addressed much that fell between the cracks of existing governance arrangements, including substantive issues such as sprawl and affordable housing and process tasks such as bringing interests together to find and carry out mutually acceptable actions that could have a regional impact.

## THEORIES OF CHANGE

The single most critical element in the design and implementation of a CRI is its theory of change—that is, the principles and logic underlying its strategy of action. The four CRIs each employed a different theory of change. SBC, JV:SV, and SDD all had theories of change that proved to be effective in their contexts, whereas some of BAASC's theory was quite limited and appears not to have worked well. Most of those involved in the CRIs did not talk about their theory of change in explicit terms and probably would not have been able to articulate it. The theory tended to be taken for granted. Nonetheless, it can be seen through participants' and leaders' actions and the way they talked about their reasoning. Often participants in a CRI appeared to have internalized the theory of change as they applied shared heuristics to get things done. Articulating the theory of change is important, however, so participants can assess, improve, or even reject it when it is not producing results. Moreover, funding organizations need to be able to assess the theory as part of their decision-making process about initiatives they may fund.

### **Sierra Business Council: Change Through Dialogue, Research, and Collaboration**

The SBC theory of change turned out to be one of the most effective: change business leaders' understandings of the issues—in particular, show them how protection of the environment can help build the economy, model collaboration for them, and provide process and knowledge support to both business and community leaders—and these people will in turn change the culture and practices of the region. Because these were respected leaders, they would be able to convince others, and the result would be changed policies in the region. SBC's theory required the development of research findings to show how this link of environment and economy worked. The findings themselves would have to be explained in ways that could convey ideas to a broad audience. SBC staff used their Venn diagram to show the intersection of natural, economic, and social capital in a way that people could understand and as a tool to make their case that the development of each kind of capital increased total wealth. Their research reports on sustainable

practices gave readers real stories of how these types of capital could be jointly enhanced. SBC's theory also involved the idea that genuine learning and change take place through dialogue and interaction. Rather than simply disseminating their reports, they created venues for dialogue around them and their implications in public forums, conferences, and Leadership Seminar sessions. Finally, their theory of change hypothesized that collaborative efforts would be the most effective way not only to reduce paralyzing conflicts among business, ranching, and environmental interests but also to establish working relationships that could lead to new perceptions, policies, and practices. Accordingly, staff members were collaborative in all their work with local communities, and the organization invested in the Sierra Leadership Seminar, which trained civic leaders in collaborative methods.

### **Joint Venture: Silicon Valley: Applying the Venture Capital Model**

JV:SV's theory of change was grounded in its belief that the new dynamics of business in Silicon Valley could be successfully applied in the public sphere to create a stronger region. In this venture capital model, capitalists provided funding and support to groups with new ideas and the energy and talent to implement them. The capitalist and the new venture are separate, connected only through the flow of resources. It was JV:SV's philosophy to let as many projects emerge as possible. If an idea could find a champion, then it could become a project and part of JV:SV. Some projects, even after finding champions, were not able to get off the ground. Others started, completed their purpose, and ended. Still others became so firmly established that they spun off from JV:SV completely. This approach encouraged innovation, but it also assumed there would be failures. JV:SV leaders believed that by adapting this model from business to a public milieu, useful ideas would come to the surface and could be carefully incubated and connected with resources. These new and successful ideas would eventually create the changes that could help the region prosper.

To implement this model, JV:SV needed an organizational structure that allowed for the adaptability and flexibility necessary to respond to a diversity of ideas and approaches. They settled on a network structure, with the staff and the board comprising the central core. Initiatives were linked to the core and each other through relationships and shared resources. The core was JV:SV's organizational center, from which JV:SV managed its work, built partnerships, engaged in collaboration, launched initiatives, and allocated resources to new projects. This structure connected the network to many different constituencies in the Valley, allowing each node the opportunity to leverage the resources and knowledge available to the others. This model required enlisting recognized leaders who were capable of working collaboratively and willing to take risks. It required a constant flow of reliable information to help leaders guide the direction of resources and a feedback system of performance measures and accountability to track the progress of any given venture. It also required a flexible organization that could adapt to support a new initiative and network of relationships and that could bring in additional resources as needed. JV:SV's theory was that using this model would produce a rich array of ideas, provide the opportunity to test them, and select the best with a minimum of sunk cost. JV:SV leadership also believed that when supported

by connected leadership, collaborative partnerships, reliable data, progress measures, and adaptable resources, these good ideas would generate change that was right for the region.

### **San Diego Dialogue: Educating Elites**

SDD's theory of change was grounded in a belief in the power of civic leadership and knowledge. The founders of SDD believed that local government was not up to the task of keeping the region strong, and that it was civic-minded elites who could and would make things happen. Although these elites were not elected officials, they were able to exercise influence through their networks of personal relationships. Furthermore, SDD was based in a UCSD program known for finding creative ways to link the community with knowledge. SDD's approach was to connect the region's elites with each other, engage them in dialogue about regional problems, and provide research to inform their discussions. Armed with new understandings of both the region's problems and possible solutions, these elites would put their personal networks to work to disseminate their knowledge and to implement the solutions. Dialogue staff believed that when a region's leaders engaged in dialogue informed by research, the region would become smarter and stronger.

This theory required that SDD recruit people with strong reputations as regional leaders. The Executive Director carefully managed the members through personal meetings and small gatherings. He treated key members in a way that assured them the organization viewed them as important. SDD also provided special opportunities to their most influential members, including leadership roles within the organization, invitation-only events, and intimate gatherings with decision makers.

The theory then required building the intellectual capacity of these members. SDD would provide highly respected research and create settings for members to engage in a dialogue around the meaning of that research. The members would interact around this research, building knowledge and a personal investment in using that knowledge to effect change. Through this process, they would develop solutions for addressing regional problems. Dialogue founders expected that this combination of powerful elites championing an idea and the university's reputation for top-quality research would inspire trust and provide channels for disseminating regional solutions. SDD maintained its status as a neutral convener, but members were free to advocate and organize. The members and SDD complemented each other, each offering a part of the recipe for change that the other could not provide on its own. SDD believed that knowledge, backed with power, informed decisions and would lead to change.

For example, one early SDD project was a study dealing with Lindbergh Field, San Diego's airport. The airport was small, and many felt it would not be able to accommodate the future needs of the region; no one, however, was taking the lead to manage the problem or the search for a solution. One prominent local businessman and Dialogue member proposed a joint powers authority. The Dialogue followed up with a research survey asking San Diegans how they would rate their needs on a dozen different aspects of the airport issues and how they compared eight different potential airport sites. Using this data, the Dialogue created a committee and prepared a

study of several options. The *San Diego Union Tribune* made the report into a special insert in the Sunday paper. Although the report did not result in consensus on the airport issue or a concrete action plan, participants felt it raised the level of discourse and enabled Dialogue members to become important players in the establishment of a regional airport authority almost 10 years later.

**Bay Area Alliance for a Sustainable Community:  
Interest-Group Action, Change Through Forecasts, and Helping the Real Estate Community**

BAASC had different theories of change for its three main projects. The theory behind *The Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area* was grounded in a traditional pluralist model of public choice. BAASC would assemble a diverse group of stakeholders who would build consensus among themselves on a course of action and then lobby state and local governments to implement their ideas. Because of their diversity, their unity would be particularly persuasive. Their tacit theory about how to get this unity was to create a proposal that had something for all the stakeholders and nothing unacceptable to any stakeholder. It was produced through compromise and accordingly resulted in a lowest-common-denominator set of proposals. The proposals themselves were quite general and did not generate the kind of energy and commitment that would be needed for this political strategy to work effectively.

BAASC did try to educate regional leaders about its ideas in the hope that members would assist in lobbying for legislative change. The organization held public forums about the need to pursue the policies in the *Compact*. Unlike SBC and SDD, however, BAASC did not use a dialogue model in which participants could discuss and develop ownership of proposals. Rather, BAASC used a model in which spokespeople presented, and the audience listened. In any case, most of the invited participants already wanted to promote smart growth. This forum model lacked the grounding in research that had been critical to mobilizing civic leaders in SBC and SDD. The overall theory of change did not take into account that the effectiveness of interest group pressure on legislatures was diminishing in comparison to campaigns by interests with ample funding. BAASC did not articulate a theory about how legislation gets made, and its attempts to write and promote legislation failed. Once the *Compact* was finished, BAASC saw the next step as marketing. The Alliance has been unable, however, to acquire the substantial funding needed for media campaigns to hone their message and persuade elected officials to move forward on their proposals.

The BAASC theory fit the standard practice of policy advocacy: a group identifies a problem, develops the “right” fix for it, and promotes that fix with political pressure and media campaigns, which causes legislatures to enact the fix. BAASC leaders assumed that the steering committee would develop the right solutions, and the next step would be to create “political will” so elected officials would take action to implement them. When the strategy did not work, BAASC did not reflect on it or try to change it. Unlike the other CRIs’ approaches, BAASC’s was linear, without much feedback and with little adaptiveness. It had opportunities it did not use to get feedback on its theory of change in the leadership forums and membership meetings, where many individuals were themselves change agents. BAASC’s theory also lacked something all

three of the other CRI's had—an explicit strategy of developing research for joint learning and focusing attention.

BAASC's two other projects relied on other theories of change. The Smart Growth/Regional Livability Footprint was built on the theory that if a group could determine an ideal pattern of growth and input it into models that determine infrastructure investment, the use of those models would be self-fulfilling. This theory did not take into account how the forecasters would or could incorporate the information, much less how the decision makers would use it. What neither the *Compact* nor Footprint projects included in their theories was that those who would have to actually make the changes should be part of the dialogue in the first place. It was a case of a group deciding on actions that others, not at the table, should implement. Those others had neither ownership nor motivation to do so.

The Community Capital Investment Initiative was based on the theory that investment opportunities existed in disadvantaged neighborhoods that could yield market-rate returns and therefore attract substantial private capital. Disadvantaged neighborhoods offered untapped business opportunities, and knowledgeable community players would assist investors in finding these opportunities if investors provided benefit to the community. If CCII could achieve this, there would be a sustainable flow of beneficial real estate development in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The adequacy of this theory remains to be determined.

## LEADERSHIP STYLE

Collaborative leadership characterized the CRIs. The principal CRI leaders worked with others to decide what to do and how. They were hands-on individuals deeply engaged in the missions of their organizations. They provided inspiration and encouragement, created opportunities for joint action, and encouraged others to become leaders in their own right. They were strong leaders, but their strength did not come from an authoritarian style, nor from insisting on their own visions and ideas, but rather from an ability to work with others to develop a shared vision and strategy and help turn these into action. Each CRI had at least one principal leader, usually the president of the organization, but these individuals represented only part of the leadership. CRIs created and nurtured leaders, and many others played leadership roles in developing the CRIs' programs and taking initiative in public arenas. These included members of boards of directors, CRI staff, members of the organization, planners, public officials, and other community leaders.

There are many ways to lead collaborative organizations. SBC used the disciple model. Staff began by educating a small group, members of which in turn engaged others to carry the message out indefinitely to more layers of disciples. JV:SV's leadership was enabling and facilitative, convening, and encouraging. JV:SV leaders would begin an initiative and then step back to let others take it forward. SDD's model was personal, as its leader built individual relationships with elites, tying them to the organization through personal relationships. BAASC's leadership model with the *Compact* was political and focused on creating a vision, building coalitions, and lobbying decision makers.



The theory of change for each CRI seems to have emerged from the idiosyncratic personal style and skills of its principal leaders. This may account for the difficulties CRIs have had in replacing founding leaders, as new leaders' styles do not always mesh with the organizations' mission or theory of change. Organizations invariably have a challenge when they shift from a founding, charismatic leader to someone who can move the organization into the next phase of becoming an institutionalized operation, less dependent on an individual and more dependent on shared norms, heuristics, and practices. None of the CRIs has had an easy time in this process.

### **Sierra Business Council: Listening, Convening, and Collaborating**

Lucy Blake, founder of SBC, was its most significant leader. Her leadership reflected her many talents and built on her creativity. She conceived the idea of a regional organization of businesspeople who would understand the importance of the environment. She used her skills from prior experience in community organizing and running political campaigns for environmental causes to build the organization and spread its vision. She applied a critical and often unrecognized leadership skill, listening, as she met with individuals and groups “over steak and apple pie” to understand their perceptions, concerns, and desires for the region and themselves. In this process, she and SBC staff built trust and made sure that others had ownership of initiatives rather than feeling coerced. (In the one case where SBC failed to do this, in Nevada County, the project collapsed.) This sort of leadership led to the creation of a distributed network of leaders who could work through the region's problems with SBC's support. For this effort, Blake won a MacArthur “genius” award, and later SBC won the Governor's Award for Environmental and Economic Leadership.

Blake was not the only leader in SBC. The chair of the board, a prominent businessperson and publisher of a regional magazine, worked tirelessly to get others in the business community to see the importance of the environment and the value of collaboration and played a significant role in mobilizing the community. Several staff members demonstrated leadership as well, as they followed Blake's model and took initiative on issues, always working collaboratively with community leaders. For example, the staff person in charge of Town Planning Services built trust with local leaders and their staffs by providing them with information, facilitation, and technical assistance, while also demonstrating how to collaborate. Another staff person worked with others in the region to initiate action on environmental protection issues.

After Blake left, a very different kind of leader, James Sayer, was chosen as President. His focus was on helping the organization become institutionalized and developing management systems. Blake had made things happen in part by doing things personally. Sayer wanted an organization that could run itself. He did not do the type of listening in the field that Blake had, nor did he support the technical services program that brought SBC staff into the far reaches of the Sierra to work with local communities. He chose to focus his personal leadership on a highly visible issue, the creation of a Sierra Nevada Conservancy, which Blake had begun to work on with ranchers. Sayer's experience as an environmental advocate working with many state agencies gave him the knowledge and political skills to advance this idea and assure that state legislation was

written, passed, and implemented. Unfortunately this effort was not popular in conservative rural communities, where many opposed the idea of government buying land, even from willing sellers. Sayer had not consulted with these people, who became suspicious and angry with SBC, though they had trusted Lucy Blake in the past. Sayer's more aloof and bureaucratic style was not as effective in the Sierra context as Blake's more personal and interactive approach, and it did not fit well with the original theory of change. Sayer resigned, and the organization began a search for the right leader, focusing on passion, vision, communication, and negotiation skills, and understanding of rural communities. In its search for its third leader, SBC wrote a job description carefully articulating the style of leadership that would mesh with the mission. Their new President is a small-business person with experience working with nonprofits on leadership, collaboration, and community development and knowledge of rural communities.

**Joint Venture: Silicon Valley:  
A Popular Leader Relies on Networks and a Business Approach**

Becky Morgan, JV:SV's first CEO, was critical to its success. Morgan left her position as state senator to lead JV:SV, bringing instant credibility to the young organization. She came with enormous public support and turned out to be a skilled public persona for JV:SV and a hard-working, talented manager who knew how to motivate her co-workers. She was also married to one of the Valley's most successful business people, who had played a role in setting up JV:SV. Morgan brought a broad network of relationships to the organization and a familiarity with JV:SV's core concerns. Her collaborative style and business-oriented approach helped to bring in new partners, focus JV:SV's work, and build the expectation of measurable results.

JV:SV's board complemented Morgan's leadership. To execute its vision, JV:SV needed high-level, influential professionals who were experienced with the venture capital model and committed to Silicon Valley. The board was therefore composed of the highest strata of corporate and public sector leadership in the Valley. The board included senior executives from the business sector, government officials, and leaders from the education sector. This innovative combination at the board level was broad enough to generate new ideas and credibility for JV:SV's projects but limited enough to maintain focus. These leaders had both skills and networks to help implement change.

Both Morgan's leadership style and JV:SV's venture capital model encouraged innovative thinking and new ideas. When a staff person, a board member, or even a community member attending one of JV:SV's public meetings had an idea for a project that would improve life in the Valley, that idea was listened to. If it was interesting enough to attract a champion from within JV:SV, most notably Becky Morgan or the board, the idea had the potential to become a project. JV:SV's projects varied widely in resources, scope, and duration, but they all generated enough traction from within the organization to merit an allocation of resources and association with the JV:SV name. In this way, leadership was diffused within JV:SV. In the entrepreneurial style, projects were the manifestation of a successful overlapping of ideas, leadership, and resources, with a pinch of good timing.



Ruben Barrales did not have Morgan's breadth of experience or her network of relationships within the Valley, and he could not lead as effectively in a venture capital model. While Morgan had been a senator, she was no longer in politics while at JV:SV. Barrales, on the other hand, took a position with the 2000 Bush presidential campaign while still working with JV:SV. Many observers felt that in doing so he compromised the organization's standing as a nonpartisan, neutral convener. He was not perceived to be as committed to the region as Morgan, and many believed that he took this position as a rung in his career ladder rather than as a career destination. During his tenure the organization stumbled, losing critical staff, board members, and much of the energy behind the organization. Their funding surplus diminished and was not replaced with new money. Although this decline cannot be entirely blamed on Barrales' leadership, he was not a good fit to maintain the forward momentum created by Morgan. The new President, Russell Hancock, comes with knowledge and experience with the business community in the region. It remains to be seen what stamp he will place on the organization.

### **San Diego Dialogue: Creating Dialogue Among Elites**

Dean Walshok played the key role in founding the San Diego Dialogue and in shaping its organizational focus. Walshok had the status and experience within the university necessary to move the Dialogue from an idea to a functioning organization. She helped assemble the leaders who attended the first Dialogue sessions and became the organization's first members. Her background and beliefs helped give the organization its form and approach. Walshok is a sociologist trained in area studies. She has a deep personal dedication to the power of dialogue and to the idea of civic learning, in particular to the model of Swedish democratic learning communities. She believes such efforts help people step outside the silos created by their professional associations, learn to approach problems jointly, and build community. She wanted to build this kind of learning in the San Diego region.

Walshok's leadership was instrumental in creating the Dialogue, but once the organization was up and running, her role diminished to that of a distant advisor. It was the leadership of Executive Director Chuck Nathanson that maintained the organization over time and ultimately gave SDD its institutional form. Nathanson had a personal interest in political power, and he used a one-on-one style of building and maintaining personal relationships. First, he recruited the region's most influential leaders. Then he managed the Dialogue's decision-making through his relationships with members. It was Nathanson's style to manage and distribute information personally rather than to make it generally available. His style was only one of several represented within the Dialogue organization, but ultimately it was the most powerful. He became the Dialogue's public face. As one member stated, "The Dialogue is Chuck Nathanson."

While Walshok and Nathanson deliberately designed SDD to be an organization of leaders, not all members had equal opportunities for leadership within the organization. Only high-profile members or members who donated enough money to be included in the elite McGill Circle were offered positions of leadership on the steering committee or on issue-oriented panels. SDD

members associated with universities in the region served on an advisory board that oversaw the Dialogue's research. Members attended plenary sessions and shared their ideas on such topics as developing the cross-border region's trade infrastructure, energy issues, building a smart-growth vision for the San Diego region, and accountability in public education. Informally, they added to change in the region whenever they took their new knowledge back to their constituents and shared their learning with their colleagues. Members also served on panels or committees that managed specific projects and moved issues forward. They championed the Dialogue's proposals and helped put them in the hands of decision makers. These members were often the less-public face of San Diego Dialogue, but their leadership was also critical to the Dialogue's success.

### **Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities: Sharing Leadership**

BAASC relied on the shared leadership of its steering committee members. This was a group of five strong-minded individuals, representing each of the three E's and government, who hashed out all decisions jointly. Most participants regarded Sunne McPeak of the Bay Area Council (BAC) as the driving force in the group; she took the most active role in raising money and encouraging initiative and implementation and had the clearest vision of where they needed to go. The strength of this vision, however, sometimes meant that it was hard to create the innovative solutions that can come out of collaboration. Carl Anthony, the first representative for social equity, was also a strong and vocal leader who ultimately forged a mutually beneficial agreement with McPeak on setting up the Community Capital Investment Initiative. Others often allowed McPeak to take the lead because of her energy, passion, and commitment. The representatives from ABAG changed several times during the course of the work, and a new equity representative took over from Anthony after his departure to the Ford Foundation.

BAASC gathered a membership of individuals representing advocacy organizations in each of the three E's. It held quarterly meetings that were educational for members and gave the Steering Committee feedback on their ideas. But BAASC did little to build the leadership abilities of these members in comparison to the other CRIs. The opportunity for the members to have collaborative learning dialogue among themselves was limited to a few task forces in the early years, but in later years members talked primarily within their caucuses.

There were disadvantages to BAASC's model of shared leadership among a small group. One was that its overall purpose and message were never very clear. Moreover, the minimal staffing level meant there was no one to hone a message or follow up on many issues. BAASC was slow in making decisions, often ending up with a lowest-common-denominator approach and seldom taking bold initiatives. BAASC missed the opportunity that other CRIs exploited to build a distributed network of leaders who would carry on their mission and work with them in the future. Leaders did not conduct the sort of dialogue that changes minds, helps people to understand what it will take to draw people with differing views into a common mission, or generates real commitment. The steering committee's membership was based on the official roles of the members rather than on their personal qualities, so members changed along with management of the partner

organizations. It remains to be seen if the new steering committee members will share the passion and commitment of the original members, particularly now that the original major projects are complete and no new initiatives are in the pipeline.

## REGIONAL FIT

The CRI's strength as an institutional form came in great part from the way each was tailored to the dynamics and culture of its region. Each filled a gap left by existing institutions, but in doing so, each also drew on the strengths and practices of the region and tried to compensate for its deficiencies. Each chose topics where there were perceived problems, but also generated enough energy and interest in the region to encourage involvement. Their relative degree of success depended in considerable part on how good the fit was between their overall strategy and agenda, the region's needs, and its political culture. Regional collaborations must "fit" the region and address issues that are compelling for the leaders whom they need to enlist. A collaborative effort cannot simply adopt a model from somewhere else, as did the BAASC. CRIs need to be built on careful groundwork with civic leaders who understand the region's unique culture and urgent issues.

### **Creating Networks and a Sense of the Sierra Region**

The strengths of the Sierra region were its natural beauty, its fiercely independent population, and its growing tourism and recreation sector. Its biggest weakness was the failure of civic leaders to recognize the interdependence of their environment and economy. Many tended to favor one or the other. The biggest gap was the lack of regional institutions, or even a shared sense of a region across this far-flung area, which shared problems, politics, and opportunities. Its towns were small and viewpoints parochial and defensive rather than embracing of the inevitably changing future or taking leadership to direct that future in a realistic way. SBC leadership understood that they needed to build trust, work collaboratively with civic leaders, often one-on-one, and develop and spread a new vision for the region that encompassed and linked the environment and the economy. They needed to help people across the region develop networks and learn to become collaborative leaders to bridge political divisions.

### **Joint Venture: Silicon Valley and the Venture Capital Model**

In 1993, when JV:SV came into being, the once-booming economy in Silicon Valley had stalled. JV:SV enlisted respected leaders, particularly from the high-tech sector, to improve the long-term economic future of the region. The board membership drew on the strengths of the Valley, including Stanford and other educational institutions as well as corporations. Bringing these individuals together also brought in their networks, which was a familiar way of getting things done in Silicon Valley. These leaders took the venture capital model, which also was familiar and had

contributed much to Silicon Valley's success, and used it to build a flexible organization that would develop projects. JV:SV supported projects in areas where its leadership had special expertise, such as its Smart Permit program, building on technology to streamline the permitting processes that many thought had hindered economic progress. The education program was less successful, in part because educators were not comfortable with the language or techniques inherent in a business-based approach. Until JV:SV began its work, Silicon Valley was not seen as a region. JV:SV provided the setting, support, and encouragement that had not been available previously for joint work among leaders for the benefit of the region.

### **Small-Town San Diego**

San Diego had a long-standing self-awareness as a region and a small-town approach to getting things done. In an area known for being politically conservative and generally mistrustful of government, this meant that change often came through the work of civic-minded business leaders. The San Diego region benefited from the presence of a world-class university with historical ties to the business community, and San Diego Dialogue built on this. A major weakness of the region's economic strategies had been the failure of leaders to recognize that San Diego's economy was intertwined with Tijuana's. Accordingly, there was an institutional gap in this area and no mechanism for evaluating or supporting the cross-border economy. Moreover, though both old-economy and new-economy business leaders were powerful and civic minded, they were not linked together and did not have the knowledge they would need to address the region's problems. The Dialogue developed a strategy well suited to the region: convening elites, developing high-quality research on the issues they identified, and helping them to instigate innovative actions that would draw on their networks of other leaders.

### **Building on the Bay Area's Advocacy Groups**

The Bay Area is a region of diverse, well-organized, and often conflictual advocacy groups, many nonprofit service organizations, a strong and civic-minded business community, and a multiplicity of regional agencies—with little intercommunication. In organizing BAASC to seek agreement across these interests, its leadership addressed a need and an institutional vacuum. There were no forums for dialogue among these stakeholders and no opportunity for them to learn in a civil environment about each other's needs and concerns. The Alliance copied a model from the President's Council on Sustainable Development, which did not grow, however, out of specific Bay Area concerns and context. BAASC focused on smart growth and the related issues of housing and environmental protection, which were important in the Bay Area, where traffic and housing costs were high on the list of public concerns. In practice, BAASC's smart-growth agenda did not tackle either; its approach was generic rather than tailored to specific problems, and its potential solutions could not occur for many years. It also was a contentious process because the meaning of smart growth differed among stakeholders. The CCII generated more consensus and positive energy and attention because it was a focused effort dealing in a concrete way with a well-recognized need for

investment in poor neighborhoods. BAASC's larger goal was to change the institutions and practices that produced unsustainable land-use patterns. It was not clear, however, that other regional leaders recognized this as a problem or had the knowledge or skills to address it.

## USE OF RESEARCH BY CRIs

In collaborative processes, reliable information is crucial. Three of the four CRIs built much of their work on research and information produced by one or more widely trusted sources. The fourth, BAASC, relied on very little research or data in its deliberations. This failure to use research accounts in part for the Alliance's difficulties in reaching a robust agreement or in taking effective action. The strategies the other three used all involved substantial investment in research, along with dialogue, to help design and make sense of the research as well as to mobilize action. Research was at the core of their theories of change.

### Sierra Business Council: Research Drives the Vision

Research was a cornerstone of SBC's strategy and a major factor in its success. What SBC did, however, was not as simple as preparing a study and disseminating it. The theory of change made the development and application of the research itself integral to everything they did. The organization recognized that how they produced information mattered, as did how they disseminated it. Staff worked on the first research project, *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index*, with a local advisory committee composed of members from different interests to help guide its content and format. They also had it reviewed by experts around the state before publication. The *Wealth Index* was built around the Venn diagram showing the ways that natural, financial, and social capital overlapped and reinforced one another (see Figure 1, page 5). It involved some novel indicators on these issues, and the report, which contained graphs and brief and readable explanations of the measures and their recent movements and trends, was interesting and sometimes surprising, even for local people. Staff presented the *Wealth Index* at a series of forums, in the annual conference, and in the Sierra Leadership Seminar. These dialogues gave people the chance to make sense of the *Wealth Index* in a communal way and build shared understanding of conditions in the Sierra. It opened a conversation about sustainability and what might be done to improve it. Because it provided data for the region as a whole, it helped people see that they shared common issues.

The *Wealth Index* was popular and widely read. Some subregions asked SBC to prepare similar indexes for their own areas. Soon SBC began work on an updated edition with even more compelling indicators, and later on a third edition. SBC hired a full-time research director to prepare these and other research reports. This first foray into research was successful in promoting the mission, attracting regional attention, and giving SBC credibility. Remarkably, though SBC was on a mission with an agenda, the research it produced was widely accepted as accurate. This acceptance can be explained by the transparency that the researchers employed in working with advisory groups and experts. It was tested and reviewed in multiple ways by different players.

Moreover, in presenting the research publicly, SBC did not use the reports as advocacy pieces to promote a particular strategy. On the contrary, it simply put them forward for discussion. Strategies were only developed after extended dialogue based in great part on the research.

SBC used versions of this research model in virtually every project. The second project, *Planning for Prosperity*, was a report on methods and techniques for sustainable land use. After feedback from advisors, staff modified the report so that instead of being a list of do's and don'ts, it focused on success stories, vivid examples that people throughout the region could follow. The document made the case that sustainable land use was feasible. Again, SBC held forums and dialogues around the region. This strategy paid off in on-the-ground changes when planners and public officials in Placer County, which was affected by rapid suburban growth, began dialogues with SBC staff on how they could implement the concepts of *Planning for Prosperity*. SBC had been looking for an opportunity to create a Sierra model for sustainability, and local leaders were concerned about how to manage the growth they were facing. After considerable dialogue, and after several supervisors and county staff took the Sierra Leadership Seminar training, this largely conservative board of supervisors adopted Placer Legacy, a strategy for preserving habitat and open space that built on *Planning for Prosperity*. SBC provided technical assistance and enlisted a high-level advisory board of scientists to help develop the program. Staff, with expert help, prepared a major scientific report on the conditions and state of lands in the Sierra, which helped build the Working Landscapes Program to get landowners to sell conservation easements. It also provided a basis for the creation of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

In an effort to use the Placer Legacy concepts in Nevada County, SBC grounded the proposal for the Natural Heritage 2020 program in a study of land in that county. The effort failed, however, because SBC had not conducted the dialogue necessary to assure that the research and SBC itself were trusted and regarded as neutral. If it had, it would have discovered the well-organized opposition it was to face. This highly public failure pointed out how critical dialogue can be to creating and applying research for particular contexts. SBC had made the mistake of trying to use the Placer County model in another locale instead of creating a unique approach tailored to the values and politics of Nevada County.

### **Joint Venture: Silicon Valley: Research to Inform Action**

JV:SV uses consultants to do much of its research and has an important partnership with Collaborative Economics, a well-respected and creative consulting firm in the Valley. In the very first phase of the organization, the firm did a large-scale study of the region to identify specific problems that were slowing down the region's economy. The two reports on the findings of this research, *A Region at Risk* and *Blueprint for a 21st Century Community*, have been important documents for guiding the work of JV:SV and have been catalysts for many of its initiatives.

JV:SV's model is based on the premise that research should inform action. The organization does not shape the research as much as work from it. So it is not surprising that one of its most successful and enduring projects has been the Silicon Valley *Index*, which had a somewhat different



purpose and strategy for use than SBC's index. Similar to SBC's, the JV:SV index was intended to be a kind of performance measurement for the region. It was not explicitly about sustainability, but it was designed to show how the region was doing on issues of importance to its economy and quality of life. While the indicators were carefully selected, the Silicon Valley *Index* was designed as a kind of multipurpose pulse taking rather than as a way of promoting a point of view and making an argument, as was the case with SBC's Wealth Index. JV:SV's index was targeted at both civic leaders and a broader public and quickly posted on the Web so that all had ready access. It has become a highly visible part of JV:SV's work, and it is updated annually. Unlike SBC, however, JV:SV did not roll out its index in various forums and dialogue situations. It presented a more conventional set of indicators—namely those that comprise a kind of report card to identify trends, while the Wealth Index was designed to help frame issues so people would be motivated to work on them. Both served the purpose of helping to create a sense of region.

JV:SV uses research to identify problems and to measure progress. The two primary targets of JV:SV's research are the Silicon Valley economy and JV:SV itself. Their dialogue is about whether the region is getting better. If so, what about JV:SV is making that happen? How can JV:SV better support regional growth? Each individual initiative is accountable to meeting specific, measurable standards of progress. It is part of the organization's culture to encourage continual improvement, measurable outcomes, and problem-focused studies. Thus analysis of both successes and failures are part of the culture.

### **San Diego Dialogue: Building Intellectual Capital Through Research and Dialogue**

The San Diego Dialogue engaged in a dynamic process that used strategically selected research along with dialogue to increase the intellectual capital of its members. After the members first decided to take on a topic, they began with a presentation, often by an expert in the field, and an active discussion. This was not a passive situation where experts handed information down to members, but an active and iterative process that shaped the topic and the members' understanding of it. After initial discussions, if the topic generated enough interest and funding could be secured, SDD staff generated further research that analyzed the problem and possible remedies. They brought the results back to the Dialogue membership, often highlighting a key technical insight that would transform the group's understanding of the problem. By this stage, SDD had used the research to reframe the problem strategically and identify a set of possible ways to approach the issue. Their final discussions were oriented toward how to disseminate their findings in the region. Depending on their strategy, they made the findings into reports, shared them through presentations to decision makers, published them in the newspaper, or posted them on the Dialogue's Web site. SDD's influential members also shared the ideas through their personal social networks.

As one of its first projects, in cooperation with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, SDD commissioned a study to better understand who was crossing the border and why the lines into the United States were so long. An economic demographer designed a survey, and college



students from Mexico conducted interviews of people waiting in line to cross. What they discovered was completely unexpected: frequent crossers—people who crossed more than once a week—accounted for 96 percent of the crossings. Using this key piece of information, they were able to reframe the issue of border crossing from one of immigration to one of commerce. Next, staff wrote and disseminated a report called *Who Crosses the Border*, which explained their findings and advocated for a new understanding of the San Diego area as a cross-border region. A Dialogue member who was the United States Attorney for the Southern District of California formed a task force with a congresswoman from San Diego. Using their key research findings on frequent border crossings, they built a diverse coalition in support of a commuter lane. A pilot project began in 1994 and later a permanent lane, known as SENTRI, was installed. Although still small (only 20,000 of approximately 350,000 to 400,000 frequent crossers are enrolled), the project is considered a success. Recently, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with its Canadian counterpart, installed a version of the SENTRI program called NEXUS at several Canadian border crossings.

SDD was built on the concept that research can produce insight and answers, a viewpoint that is not surprising because the founder and Executive Director of SDD were academics. The challenge became connecting that knowledge to action. For this purpose SDD relied on a reciprocal relationship between research and dialogue, where each informed the other. It also relied on the credibility of UCSD and the fact that civic leaders saw it as a neutral convener within the region. The members of SDD have come to trust each other and the organization. They are a collegial group who recognize their common interests despite their differences. SDD's goal was to build the region's intellectual capital by engaging and educating civic leaders. They believed that leaders, motivated by their own civic-mindedness, would find ways to put that knowledge into action for the good of the region.

When the Dialogue took on education reform in the San Diego Unified School District, it began to see limitations to its approach. Education was a much more political and less technical problem than other issues the Dialogue had addressed. Locally, it involved school board elections, head-to-head fights with the teachers' unions, and relationships with parents and community groups. These were not venues where the Dialogue's networks could be effective, and both Nathanson and some of the membership became frustrated to see many of their good ideas going nowhere. Nathanson began to push for SDD to move into an advocacy role, where it could directly champion ideas and push for their implementation in political arenas. The Chancellor resisted this as not compatible with the University's mission, and Nathanson died before changes could be put into place. Under Dean Walshok's direction, SDD has returned to its roots as a source of dialogue rather than a source of action.

### **Bay Area Alliance for a Sustainable Community: Stakeholders Know Best**

BAASC's theory of change was built on the premise that gathering knowledgeable and politically involved stakeholders and getting them to agree on what to do could lead to action and solutions.

What mattered was the knowledge and beliefs of key stakeholders, not what experts thought. Indeed, there was a sense among the leaders that collectively they had the knowledge they needed. They had been discussing smart growth, housing, and transportation issues for years in various forums, and felt it was time to act. They began with working groups on topics such as growth, best practices, media outreach, and indicators. However, BAASC provided no expert assistance to these working groups, which gathered information themselves when they thought it necessary. BAASC did invite experts to its quarterly meetings to give talks on various topics, but these were usually brief and presented as part of a long agenda. There was typically little time for dialogue or engagement of the members with the experts.

The steering committee's conception of how to get agreement on the *Compact* was to present various smart-growth "fixes" that had been circulating in public discussions for some time, eliminate any that were anathema to particular stakeholders, and assemble a set that everyone could find acceptable. It was a political model of change. The trick is to find the compromises or tradeoffs that will allow the group to move forward on some form of action. Ironically, this strategy, rather than speeding up the process, delayed it and may have been the reason BAASC had so few outcomes from the *Compact*. Right up to publication of the final report, serious conflicts remained about both the facts and the policies among members of the steering committee and across the caucuses. They were only able to agree on some noncontroversial actions or develop vague agreements that did not commit anyone to anything substantial. This meant that neither the steering committee nor the members at large were particularly excited about what was agreed to. It also meant that the agreed-upon goals lacked implementation plans, other than persuasion. BAASC held forums to talk about its ideas, but as these were ideas already floating around in many circles, and BAASC could not add anything to the knowledge of most attendees, the forums had little apparent impact.

BAASC did not commission research or analyses (with a few minor exceptions) that could have changed the nature of the dialogue and the *Compact*. For example, the Alliance focused on smart growth, on which there was a tremendous amount of research at the time, but it did not develop a summary of that research. Participants as a result saw different aspects of smart growth, based on their particular interest and expertise and had different ideas about what policies could work and how. One of the biggest unresolved conflicts was around how much growth could or should be accommodated in infill development and how much would have to go to the suburbs. BAASC did not commission the research that could have helped to answer this question. It did not examine the causes and sources of growth. Thus the membership and steering committee were left with the conflicting views of environmentalists, who thought they could stop growth by simply refusing to provide housing, and businesspeople, who thought that was both impossible and undesirable.

BAASC also missed the opportunity to develop a feasible and implementable Compact because it did not have the genuine multiway dialogue that would have raised otherwise unasked questions, such as "Can we really do this?" and "Is this the way to do it?" This dialogue in turn would have generated questions that could have been addressed through the kind of research done by SDD or JV:SV. BAASC did not take advantage of the proximity of the University of

California, Berkeley, or other higher education institutions in the region in any substantial way, nor did they hire consultants. Research for BAASC, in comparison to the other CRIs, seemed to be an afterthought. Once the BAASC indicators work group and steering committee, for example, had come up with a set of indicators to support the *Compact*—which they did without expert assistance—the steering committee hired a consultant, but only to assemble the data and prepare the report. This consultant objected that some indicators did not mean what the steering committee thought or were not feasible to collect, so they agreed to let him modestly adapt what they had produced. This approach suggested that the committee regarded preparing the indicators to be mostly a political process, just as they looked at the preparation of the *Compact*, and that they believed that experts had little knowledge to add to their own. This was unlike the process for the SBC *Wealth Index*, which research staff produced by interacting with local leaders and a variety of experts. The BAASC indicator report, of course, had a different purpose from the *Wealth Index*, because it was simply a report card on regional performance. In this respect it was similar to the Silicon Valley *Index*. The difference was that BAASC produced the indicators report after it did other projects instead of using it to lay the groundwork for projects and build regional intellectual capital. All in all, it has thus far served little purpose.

### CRIs AS NETWORK STRUCTURES

These CRIs were first and foremost network structures, composed of loosely linked autonomous players including civic leaders, planners, public administrators, elected officials, businesspeople, scientists, and experts, along with CRI staff. They did not function like hierarchical organizations with authority flowing from top to bottom, except to some degree within the staffs. Nor did they operate like advocacy organizations, whose members rally around a vision, a leader, and a set of policies. Participants were independent and diverse and did not follow a leader or push a shared vision. They shared and coordinated, but in a different way from a bureaucratic or advocacy model.

CRIs created their networks through collaborative activities and dialogue in a variety of settings and around a range of tasks. The participants in turn created further dialogues and collaborative activities on their own and drew others into the network. The networks were held together by social and political capital built through these processes. Information and learning flowed through the networks among the participants, and to and from the core members of the CRI. These processes produced shared heuristics among the networked players. For example, the SBC network members shared the heuristic that collaborative dialogue was a way to address conflict and that improving the environment would improve the economy. Shared knowledge and common heuristics allowed the network to work toward common purposes without central guidance or control. SDD's role was to convene elites, create information for them, and hold dialogues around regional issues. The organization did not itself have any action projects, but its members went on to work together to create changes in the region. It was through these networks that civic entrepreneurs were identified or created.

The structure of the network in each CRI was different (see Figure 2: CRI Network Structures, page 35). SBC built a distributed network, diffuse and extensive, starting with one-on-one conversations among staff, board members, and community leaders and with multiway conversations in the conferences and Leadership Seminar. As with new collaborative projects, the staff expanded the network. Over time, the members of the network began to link as much or more to one another as to staff. They continued to see SBC as a central node, and they reconnected with SBC for advice and assistance when they wanted to start new initiatives. By the same token, SBC turned to network members for assistance in convening the right people and helping with projects around the region. Eventually SBC realized that its membership base valued these networks, which were a major contribution to this far-flung region. Recently the organization has been developing ways to make it easier for members to find and work with each other.

In SDD, the central node in the network was the Executive Director, who selected members and worked personally with the most powerful among them. He created membership forums and venues for these individuals to develop shared understandings of issues and objectives for change. They collectively created task forces and working groups to address specific issues and consider policy options. The Executive Director was also the central node among the second-tier group of less powerful members. These members were less influential people, but they expanded the Dialogue's reach within the region and added diversity to the membership list. This group was only connected to the elite group through the Executive Director.

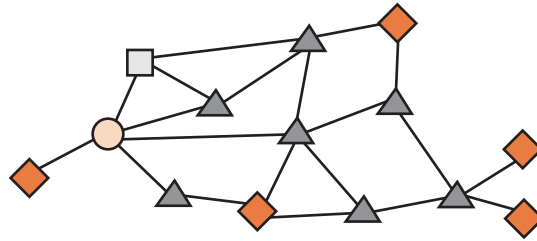
JV:SV began in a strongly networked region and built on existing social and political capital. They drew on social networks of the president and board members to find appropriate participants throughout the region for particular tasks. Staff organized the work through teams, which autonomously designed and implemented projects. These teams in turn used or built community networks, with governmental officials, businesspeople, and others as appropriate to the task. The teams were linked back to the core.

The Bay Area Alliance was entirely a network, a virtual organization, with only a quarter-time staff member and neither office nor post box. It operated entirely through partner agencies, including the Bay Area Council, ABAG, and Urban Habitat. These organizations raised money, conducted projects, provided staff for collaborative efforts, and donated time. The leaders of these partner organizations made up the steering committee. While the steering committee made decisions consensually for the Alliance, the partners remained autonomous and conducted the projects and activities as they saw fit, with periodic reporting to the steering committee. There was seldom any formal memorandum of understanding, much less a legal contract spelling out obligations and decision authority. The CCII became a spin-off of BAASC with close ties to the Bay Area Council and to some of the nonprofits in the region. With its committees and councils, it too operated as a network organization linked informally to BAASC and without lines of authority.

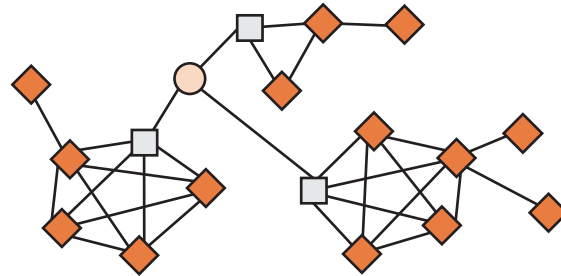
Internally, the network connected the members of the steering committee, who met for frequent dialogues and decision-making. Each member was not only linked back to his/her home organization and shared its networks, but was also tightly linked to a caucus of like-minded members and others. The steering committee members each represented the views of a respective caucus.

Figure 2. CRI Network Structures

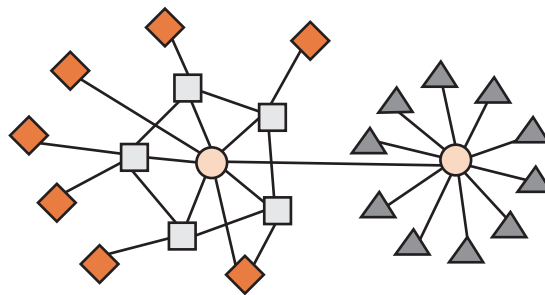
**SBC**  
Distributed



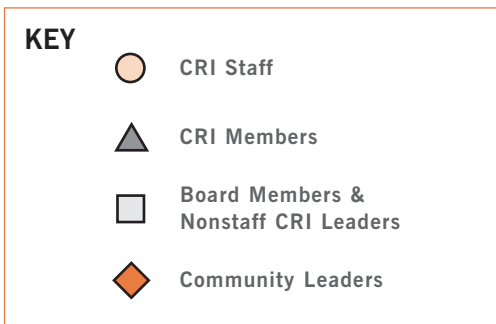
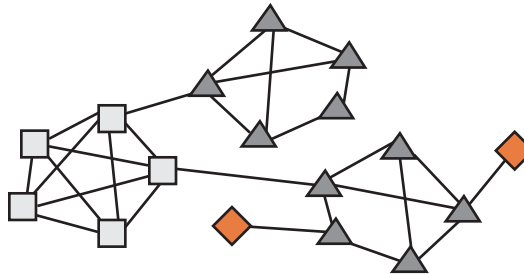
**JV:SV**  
Team-Based Clusters



**SDD**  
Central Node



**BAASC**  
Caucus-Based Clusters



The caucuses created a denser and tighter network among members of those interest groups rather than across them. Cross-caucus networks were built to some extent in the beginning through the working groups, which each represented all the E's. This team effort was often contentious and, without the skills or assistance in generating real collaborative dialogue or providing usable research, team members did not build the social and intellectual capital that could lead to shared heuristics. These teams were disbanded in any case after their preliminary work.

SBC appears to have done the most to nurture and extend networks into many elements of the community, and JV:SV has made productive use of them in project activities. SDD has started and nurtured networks, but it has not made much use of potential networks among its second-tier members. While BAASC has created tight networks among like-minded people and among the steering committee members and their organizations, these networks are relatively isolated from one another and not internally diverse. BAASC has not developed the shared heuristics or maintained the level or quality of information flow and learning that characterize the other CRIs.

## OUTCOMES

We classify CRI outcomes into three broad categories (see Table 3, page 37). First, there are tangible outcomes, e.g., land or easements purchased to protect the environment in the Sierra; new mixed-used developments in poor Bay Area neighborhoods suffering from disinvestment; the SENTRI lane for border crossing between San Diego and Tijuana; and the smart permitting system that eases development difficulties in dozens of jurisdictions in Silicon Valley. These programs are producing on-the-ground changes in their regions.

Second, there are intangible outcomes, most of which are changes in the capacity of the region to address its own issues. The CRIs built civic capacity, deliberately in some cases and less consciously in others, as a side effect of their activities. They created venues for joint work on issues and actions, and in the course of this work participants learned, built networks, and became regionalist in their thinking. They saw directions and opportunities and became more committed to change. SBC consciously built this civic capacity through its Leadership Seminar and conferences, and BAASC did so through its forums and workshops and its membership meetings. SDD did so through its membership meetings and research discussions, and JV:SV did so through its support of team initiatives. This civic capacity continues, even without the CRIs playing a role. For example, new partnerships and relationships were created among the regional agencies in BAASC and among the Sierra Leadership Seminar participants. Whatever becomes of the CRIs in the future—whether they continue on their current trajectories or disband—this civic capacity will not evaporate with them and will be a long-lasting legacy.

Third, each CRI has spun off one or more organizations that continue aspects of the work independently. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is now a state agency carrying on the work that SBC's Lucy Blake began in ranchers' kitchens in the High Sierra. Tijuana Trabajo is a counterpart to the San Diego Dialogue in Mexico and, with some shared membership, communication

-. Filling the Governance Gap: Selected Outcomes by CRI

FEATURE	CRI			
	SBC	JV:SV	SDD	BAASC
Tangible, On-the-Ground Results	<p>Placer Legacy adopted by county. Thousands of acres preserved for habitat and open space.</p> <p>Design guidelines adopted and used for communities in Mono County.</p> <p>Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Thousands of acres preserved; millions of dollars will be available in future.</p>	<p>Smart Permit program resulting in local code amendments reduced from 400 to 11. Millions of dollars saved in construction costs and permit processing affecting 90,000 projects in 27 jurisdictions.</p> <p>Smart Valley Inc. completed information infrastructure upgrading.</p> <p>Economic development team assisted in retention and expansion of dozens of Silicon Valley firms.</p>	<p>SENTRI, a dedicated lane for frequent border crossers.</p>	<p>Seven mixed-use developments with community benefits for poor neighborhoods.</p> <p>Official regional population projections based on smart-growth principles became part of regional transportation plan.</p>
Intangible, Regional Capacity Changes	<p>Knowledge of regional issues improved through <i>Wealth Index</i>, <i>Planning for Prosperity</i>, and accompanying dialogue.</p> <p>170 collaborative leaders trained through Leadership Seminar.</p> <p>New regional networks created. Local government knowledge and skills increased through town planning services.</p> <p>A vision of how to achieve sustainability.</p>	<p>New networks among jurisdictions and among businesses and jurisdictions.</p> <p>Improved understanding of region through the Silicon Valley <i>Index</i> and other research.</p> <p>Increased sense of regional identity across sectors and jurisdictions.</p> <p>Developed social capital among participants, including women.</p>	<p>Improved understanding of regional issues among influential elites.</p> <p>Framed new issues for regional agenda.</p> <p>New cross-border networks and knowledge.</p> <p>Research raised level of discourse on airport options and contributed to establishment of Airport Authority.</p>	<p>Regional agencies built new relationships among themselves and with stakeholders.</p> <p>Preparation of <i>Compact</i> helped civic leaders learn about regional issues and understand stakeholders' divergent views.</p> <p>Created social equity caucus, empowering diverse groups and new voices in the region.</p>
Spin-Offs	<p>Sierra Nevada Conservancy</p> <p>Placer Legacy</p>	<p>Smart Valley Defense/Space Consortium</p> <p>Environmental Partnership</p> <p>Business Partnering Group</p> <p>Enterprise Network (All incorporated as 501(c)(6) nonprofits with independent boards and affiliates of JV:SV)</p>	<p>Tijuana Trabajo</p>	<p>Community Capital Investment Initiative</p>
Minimal, None, or Negative	<p>Natural Heritage 2020 in Nevada County, designed to copy Placer Legacy.</p> <p>Effort to mediate major development dispute in Martis Valley.</p>	<p>Challenge 2000, collaborative education reform.</p> <p>Other initiatives that could not get adequate support to move forward.</p>	<p>Education Initiative; efforts to take political action.</p> <p>SDD-facilitated agreement on quality-of-life coalition for sales tax allocation ignored by SANDAG.</p>	<p><i>Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area</i>.</p> <p>Footprint for development.</p> <p>Regional indicators report.</p>



channels are kept open across the border and Tijuana civic leadership is built. The Community Capital Investment Initiative has raised \$170 million in real estate investment funds and has its own governance structure independent of BAASC. JV:SV has spun off a substantial number of organizations that carry on a variety of tasks.

All the CRIs did things as well that did not have demonstrable outcomes; some were abandoned, some collapsed in disarray. SBC's effort to import Placer Legacy to Nevada County in Natural Heritage 2020 generated such vehement political opposition that SBC pulled out, and county supervisors who supported it were defeated in the next election. JV:SV's Challenge 2000 project did not produce its hoped-for results, due in large part to a mismatch of the venture capital model with the political culture of education. An effort to reform education in San Diego deteriorated into such controversy that the Dialogue had to distance itself from the project. BAASC's *Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area* had few of its intended results, such as new legislation or changes in local government plans and regulations.

The specific reasons for these failures were different in each case, though some patterns exist. The CRIs have not been successful when they have tried to directly change major public policy rather than indirectly influence it through research, education, and dialogue. Seemingly this was because they are not structured to be effective lobbyists. They have not had a good track record in the education arena, despite considerable effort in two regions, probably because of the differences between the perspectives of the business and education communities. These failed efforts used a great deal of time and energy that could have been better spent if the CRIs had recognized the problems earlier.

We believe, however, that CRIs must be understood as ongoing experiments, which are bound to have false starts and mistakes. The important thing is for a CRI to keep trying things while continually reflecting on its performance, adjusting, and learning in preparation for the next initiative.

## CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

All the CRIs we studied have, to varying degrees and in varying ways, filled gaps in regional governance, and all have contributed to more sustainable regions. They have borne out The James Irvine Foundation's original theory of change in the Sustainable Communities program—that multisectoral collaborative efforts can produce workable solutions where business as usual has not been successful. As these diverse players collaborated, they came to see how the three E's are intertwined. As they worked, they built civic capacity and trained civic entrepreneurs, who in turn took action to improve their regions.

One of the remarkable things about the CRI experiment is that these organizations lacked any sort of formal power or authority, but nonetheless produced significant change in the form of on-the-ground, concrete projects; enhanced civic capacity; and spin-off organizations that continue to operate. They accomplished these things by working with elites and local leaders and, in three of

four cases, by providing them with new research and the opportunity to make sense of it within their regional contexts. They encouraged new ideas and supported them by linking together the players who could get things done. They also worked by fitting their strategies and agendas to the unique characteristics, needs, and culture of their regions.

While the wide variation in activities, skills, strategies, and contextual factors across the CRIs do not allow for a simple list of do's and don'ts for regional voluntary organizations, the assessment team has identified the following lessons from the findings of its research and this cross-cutting comparison:

- To be successful, collaborative regional organizations must be homegrown, built by those who best understand the region and are attuned to its problems and opportunities. This kind of CRI will be in sync with its culture and make use of its resources to fill in the gaps in governance. Importing a model of action from somewhere else does not work.
- CRI leaders who are most effective do not control or insist on their way. They inspire, encourage, convene, and support. They build leadership in others. They train others to be collaborative leaders. They welcome innovation and embrace challenges.
- The organization's theory of change is critical to all that it does. This theory should be made explicit so it can be tested and adapted as needed. If it is not fully developed, ideas may never become more than just ideas. However, a theory of change that works well for an organization in most ways may not be suited to all tasks. The venture capital model, for example, did not work well in an education setting. Whatever the theory, tasks need to be feasible, clear, and manageable in scope.
- CRIs are good at many things: building regional social, intellectual, and political capital; reframing contentious issues so they can be constructively addressed; acting as a neutral convener and provider of trusted knowledge; drawing in new voices and new perspectives to address regional issues; developing innovative solutions; building regional identity; turning leaders' attention to regional sustainability; and energizing and educating civic entrepreneurs.
- CRIs have not proven to be effective in the political arena. CRIs' lack of success in directly influencing policy suggests that combining stakeholder collaboration with political advocacy may not be effective. CRIs incorporate many views in often shifting and ambiguous ways, whereas advocacy requires simple messages and focused energy. It may be that advocacy should be carried out by other sorts of organizations.
- Research plays a critical role in achieving regional change and helping civic leaders fill governance gaps, but only if certain conditions are met. It must be produced by a trusted source. Its methods must be transparent and reviewed by stakeholders. It must be perceived as unbiased and not designed to promote a particular program or policy. There must be plenty of opportunity for dialogue during and after the production of the research so it can have shared meaning and advance a common agenda.

- CRIs are network structures, an emergent form of organization about which little is well understood. They are loosely linked autonomous players connected to each other in a variety of patterns. Information and social capital flow through these networks, and the participants share heuristics, feedback, and new needs and opportunities. They serve as a kind of distributed intelligence, and they can act in a self-organizing and adaptive way even without central guidance. Network structures are proliferating and likely to become increasingly important in the 21st century. Further research is needed to understand which kinds of patterns are most productive to assure innovation and effective self-organizing behavior, how information and values flow through these systems, and how and why participants join and remain part of the networks.

CRIs represent experiments in public action for regional performance. Some of their efforts have been productive and some have not. Some of the efforts will be completed and the participants will go their separate ways. Others will continue in one form or another. The learning that has taken place has changed hundreds of civic leaders and will continue to make a difference with or without the CRIs. It remains to be seen how essential the organizational and support structure of the CRIs will be to continuing to build and motivate civic leadership to improve regional performance. Other forms of organization may emerge instead. The evidence is that each of the CRIs has changed its region in key ways already. The evidence also is that the gaps in regional governance persist. Time will tell who may step up in the future and how they may operate. We believe the civic capacity that these CRIs built will be the basis for whatever comes next.

## INSIGHT COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL INITIATIVES

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