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EQUITY IN ACTION: Exploring Nine Case Examples in California

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Introduction

Across the United States, various investments seek to catalyze regional quality job creation, training, educational pathways, equity, and climate resiliency in our communities. In California, we have seen both the launch and expansion of state and federal opportunities like California Jobs First (formerly the Community Economic Resilience Fund), High Road Training Partnerships, K-16 Regional Education Collaboratives Grant Program, Regional Climate Collaboratives, the Good Jobs Challenge, and the Build Back Better Regional Challenge, in addition to existing recurring funding like the Strong Workforce Program and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. For these investments to translate into better long-term economic outcomes for the most vulnerable Californians, we must also keenly focus on how change is implemented with these resources. The actionable strategies will drive us to a more equitable future.

Throughout 2023, Jobs for the Future (JFF) met with members of its inaugural Future Ready California Advisory Committee, a group of trusted partners representing regions across California, with expertise including education, workforce, economic development, and community development. Our collective vision is to grow our economy differently, prioritizing asset-based, cross-sector approaches to build community resilience and close equity gaps. Together, we grappled with examples of what works (and what doesn't) across California's diverse geographies when trying to use external investments to close equity gaps.





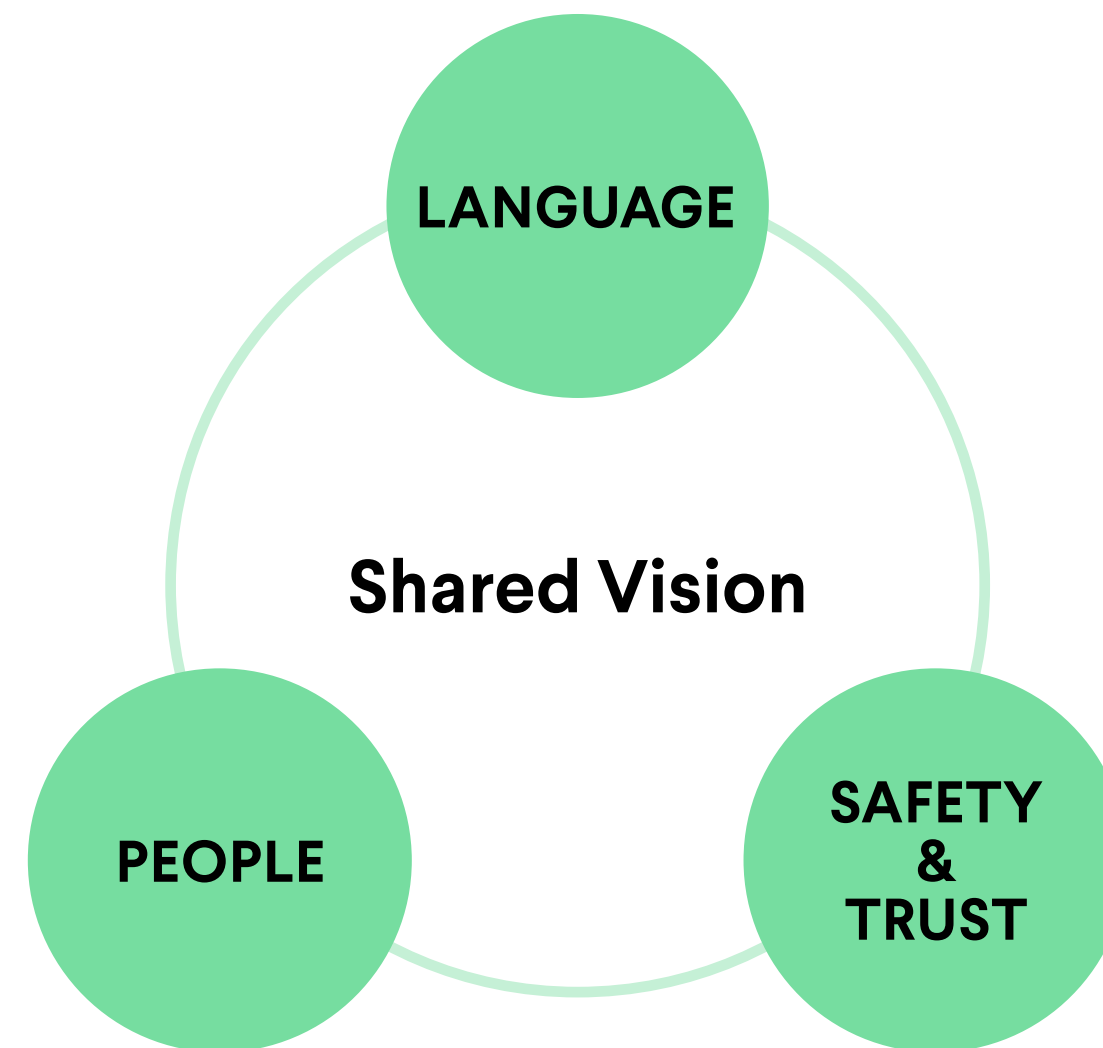
Today's funding opportunities have evolved in many ways, incorporating a broad range of requirements to facilitate this goal. They may include community engagement, population-specific strategies, employer leadership, and cross-sector collaboration. While these changes have made strides toward systemic transformation at the local and regional levels, state-level decision makers who design programs across California's diverse regions often need support to implement these objectives and promote coherence across initiatives. It is also important to lay the foundation for sustainability early and often, which may require new accountability structures, changes in ways of working, leadership development, and even culture change.

Here, we provide nine examples designed to give policymakers, funders, and other state leaders a snapshot of high-impact regional efforts throughout the state that are undertaking the real, messy, painful, and courageous work of advancing equity every day. These regional examples will offer lessons for state leaders looking to maximize the equity impact of their investments.

Building an Operating Model for Equity

Since launching our Oakland office in 2015, JFF has been learning alongside our California partners in education, workforce, industry, the public sector, and community-based organizations about what it takes to achieve [inclusive regional economic development](#).

We've found the most detailed business plan, polished report, or the best elevator pitch are not, in fact, the greatest drivers of change. Instead, systemic and sustainable transformation is powered by the interrelation of the *people* doing the work, the evolution of the *language* we use to communicate effectively, and the creation of *trust and safe spaces* to learn and act.¹





Regional, cross-sector collaboration is powered by people. The hard-fought dollars from governments in Sacramento and Washington, DC, used to implement major initiatives ultimately touch down in our communities. And while funding and political administrations may come and go, the components of executing a shared vision are what lead to continuity and lasting change. Leaders across the state cite the importance of authentic conversation spaces characterized by **safety and trust**, where voices from diverse backgrounds can come together to share their opinions without fear of repercussion or losing their grant funding. In these spaces, leaders can take off their “day job” hat and truly reflect on what change they want to see in their communities as well as what personal biases may prevent them from authentic collaboration and progress. We’re also learning more about the importance of **language** inside and outside these spaces. Developing shared definitions for terms like equity and job quality, creating opportunities for partners to infuse their unique context, unpacking what they mean in practice, and applying them to their work can accelerate regional efforts.

Ultimately, though, the **people** in both formal and informal positions to design, implement, and make decisions about regional investments have the power to harness these programs to create shared economic, environmental, and social prosperity. Who is today considered an expert is too often based on systems not created to serve us all equally. Unlocking the knowledge and insights of individuals with lived experience most proximate to the problems we are working to solve, and placing them in positions of power, holds the greatest hope for our collective success.

About These Examples

In this deck, you will find nine case examples of work across the state and the *specific, actionable strategies* leaders use to advance equity and inclusion in their communities. Of course, these approaches are not one-size-fits-all and must be designed and redesigned to meet the unique conditions of a place, its institutions, and its people.

The following slides include information on:

- **Region:** The place in California where each strategy is deployed.
- **Change agents:** The partner organizations involved in designing and implementing each strategy.
- **Context:** The geographic or social backdrop relevant to how the partners engage in this work.
- **Theory of change:** An explanation of how and why a desired change is expected to occur.
- **What are we learning from this effort?:** Key takeaways to keep in mind when applying these strategies in your own community or designing programs at the state level for others to implement.
- **Featured resources:** Where to look for additional information.

Each example represents just a snapshot of a much richer story. Please engage with the associated resources and contact the featured organizations directly to learn more and explore opportunities to collaborate.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to our Future Ready California Advisory Committee members for the candid conversations informing these examples and for their dedicated service to our state.

Nasser Albaqqal

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CEO at Fresno Stewardship Foundation

Jeffery T.D. Wallace

President and CEO at LeadersUp

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About Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all.

jff.org

About JFF's Language Choices

JFF is committed to using language that promotes equity and human dignity, rooted in the strengths of the people and communities we serve. We develop our content with the awareness that language can perpetuate privilege but also can educate, empower, and drive positive change to create a more equitable society. We routinely reevaluate our efforts as usage evolves.

info.jff.org/language-matters

Change Agents

Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity (IEGO), Youth Action Project, GRID Alternatives, El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center, Community Action Partnership of Riverside County, Goodwill Southern California, Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy, Uplift San Bernardino at Making Hope Happen Foundation

Context

Leaders in the Inland Empire, comprised of San Bernardino and Riverside counties, have historically struggled to coordinate efforts on a regional scale due to the region's vast size and diversity of geographies, cultures, and ideologies. Since 2015, IEGO has worked to address this regional disconnect and cultivate the type of cross-sector collaboration needed to unite diverse groups toward a common vision of family-sustaining jobs, high quality of life, and shared prosperity for all residents and businesses.

Theory of Change

Providing leadership and decision-making opportunities for organizations led by and closest to the communities we serve will result in more equitable outcomes for those populations.

Featured Resources

[Thrive Inland SoCal/THRIVE Inland SoCal](#)²

[Transforming the Logistics and Supply Chain Industry in the Inland Empire](#)³

[What Can CBOs Teach Us About Achieving Equity in Workforce Development?](#)⁴

EXAMPLE 1

Mobilizing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to Influence Regional Investment Decisions

Region

Inland Empire, California

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Authentic community partnerships can take time:** Several years of trust-building between regional convener IEGO and local CBO leaders created a foundation for cross-sector collaboration. Leaders and funders should focus on the shared values, consistency, and, ultimately, the quality of partnerships, not the quantity, to build momentum for regional initiatives toward long-term sustainability and impact.
- **Ensure community engagement leads to action and power sharing:** In many places, engagement efforts

focus on informing and consulting with community members about new planned programs or investments. This is a good first step but ultimately does little to shift existing decision-making structures dictating how money is spent and who benefits. IEGO recognizes the importance of involving community voice beyond a consultation role; Inland Empire CBOs now serve as experts, leaders, and decision makers in regional investments such as California Jobs First.

- **Create spaces for creative design:** To create the conditions for full participation by CBOs in regional work, you must support their engagement in meetings, committees, and governance structures. Authentic and regular opportunities to share and brainstorm solutions to the challenges they know personally are key.

Change Agents

UCLA Labor Center

Context

Founded in 1964, the Labor Center is a research and extension department at the University of California Los Angeles focused on organized labor and labor rights. It is committed to the idea that a public university should serve the people by promoting quality education and employment opportunities for all.

Theory of Change

Including community and worker voices as the experts will spark more just research through better data and a deeper understanding of equity and job quality.

Featured Resources

[Nailing New Labor Models: Exploring Sectoral Boards and High Road Training Partnerships in the Nail Salon Sector, 2023⁵](#)

[Overcooked & Underserved: The Challenges of Koreatown's Restaurant Workers, 2023⁶](#)

[Taken for a Ride: Poverty and Food Insecurity Among Workers at Universal Studios Hollywood, 2023⁷](#)

[Student Balancing Act: Worker and Learner Experiences in Los Angeles' Community Colleges, 2023⁸](#)

[Unlocking Potential: The Inland Empire Black Worker Center's Transformative IE Works Program, 2023⁹](#)

EXAMPLE 2

Redefining Who Is Considered an Expert to Transform Traditional Research Paradigms

Region

Los Angeles Metro Area

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Stakeholder engagement powers action:** Bringing together stakeholders like workers, students, faculty, and policymakers to tackle pressing issues confronting the workforce can produce quantitative and qualitative research, education, and policy initiatives that improve labor standards, generate community-friendly job opportunities, and support the rights of immigrants, students, and other young people. The UCLA Labor Center regularly engages with the communities they research.
- **Culture and narrative shifts are necessary:** There are historical power and privilege dynamics in research spaces and institutions, so transforming outdated research methods that do not align with equity or dignity will also require culture shifts and narrative changes.

Change Agents

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[Unlocking Potential: The Inland Empire Black Worker Center's Transformative IE Works Program, 2023](#)

EXAMPLE 2 (CONT.)

Redefining Who Is Considered an Expert to Transform Traditional Research Paradigms

- **A trust-based and participatory approach can bolster justice in research:** “Research justice” means deconstructing traditional research practices and providing equal access to information and community control over individuals’ own stories, informed by a participatory approach, evaluation, and alliance building.
 - » Research about communities should provide opportunities for members, from the development of the research project to the dissemination, to build authentic ownership. For example, UCLA Labor Center worked with nail salon owners and workers to explore high road training partnership opportunities and sectoral boards in a manner informed by the owners’ and workers’ lived experiences.
 - » When dealing with complex concepts like equity and job quality, it is important to provide safe spaces for meaningful engagement with those involved and to validate people’s experiences. UCLA Labor Center has utilized ongoing language-inclusive listening sessions as one approach, offering resources and interpretation in multiple languages to meet community needs. With greater participation, there is also an opportunity to develop leadership qualities through research processes.

Change Agents

ReWork the Bay, JFF, Path Group, Turning Basin Labs, Neighborhood Industries, Creating Restorative Opportunities and Programs, Building Skills Partnership, Central Valley Workers Center, Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program, Latino Service Providers, First Place for Youth, Canal Alliance

Context

Staff members who work directly with clients at community-based workforce development organizations, like case managers and community outreach specialists, help members of their communities access the training, jobs, and resources they need to be successful. However, these staff members, [who are disproportionately people of color](#), often themselves lack access to high-quality jobs.¹⁰ Due to sector norms and funding constraints, workforce organizations often lack the resources to ensure client-facing workers have the support they need to maintain their mental, physical, and economic health.

Theory of Change

Building the capacity of frontline staff members to conduct their own research about job quality will lead to actionable improvements in their job satisfaction, further empowering them to support the community members they serve.

Featured Resources

[Job Quality for Workforce Providers](#)¹¹

[Worker-Led Research Yields a New Framework for Assessing Job Quality](#)¹²

EXAMPLE 3

Improving Nonprofit Job Quality Through Worker-Led Research

Region

Los Angeles County, Central Valley, and North San Francisco Bay Area

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Workers need to lead:** Empowering worker-researchers to codesign the research process by creating and testing their hypotheses, analyzing data, and developing recommendations can lead us to better insights about the needs of frontline workers.
- **Leadership must be invested:** Involving organizational leadership in the visioning and implementation of participatory research is critical to ensure the process produces solutions that can be adopted rather than recommendations that sit on a shelf. The project team is building the capacity for frontline staff members and leadership to design solutions together through shared learning spaces and feedback loops.
- **There is not one universal solution for job quality:** Given the varying stages and unique characteristics of each organization, including size, budget, and tenure, it's crucial to recognize that there is no silver bullet approach to enhancing job quality. Recommended improvements must be customized based on the diversity of the workforce and specific characteristics of each organization.

Change Agents

San José State University, San José City College, West Valley College, Ohlone College, Foothill-De Anza College, Milpitas Unified School District, East Side Union High School District, San José Unified School District, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, The Tech Interactive, Sobrato Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, JFF

Context

Silicon Valley K-16 represents one of the three subregional hubs within the [Bay Area K-16 Collaborative](#), which was formed in response to the [California Regional K-16 Education Collaboratives Grant Program](#).¹³ This statewide investment supported regional cross-sector collaboration among leaders committed to building equitable pathways from K-12 through postsecondary completion and career entry in high-demand industries. In Silicon Valley, leaders recognized the need for a subregional approach to address the area's staggering levels of social and economic inequality. During the summer of 2022, K-12 and postsecondary education leaders, students, and community partners came together to develop a shared vision, strategic priorities, and partnership model focused on improving opportunities for local youth to remain in the communities where they grew up and benefit from the region's economic vitality.

(Note: This example focuses on the impact of student participation in this initial preplanning process. The broader Bay Area K-16 Collaborative was subsequently awarded an \$18.1 million implementation grant in fall 2023, bringing significant resources to advance the ideas collaboratively developed with youth and adult leaders.)

Theory of Change

Regional and subregional initiatives must engage with youth leadership in the design, planning, and long-term sustainability processes to adequately serve students and reach collective goals.

Featured Resources

[Not Just Another College-to-Career Initiative: Advancing Equity and Economic Prosperity Through California Regional Collaboratives](#)¹⁴

EXAMPLE 4

Centering Student Participation in Regional Education Pathway Initiatives

Region

San Francisco Bay Area

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Youth are energized to engage in complex issues:** Young people are savvy, sophisticated, and often naturally pulled toward advancing equity-centered outcomes for themselves, their peers, and their communities. They want to be a part of the solutions and just need connections to planning opportunities for regional initiatives.
- **Allocate resources to strengthen youth participation:** A student-centered design process needs to ensure youth are compensated, meetings are accessible (in terms of technology, space, and time), and leaders have taken the time to do the pre-work required for youth to have the capacity to engage meaningfully. The most effective meetings for the Bay Area K-16 Collaborative occurred when staff members met with youth in advance to review the topics and background materials and prepare talking points so youth were ready and could engage in and lead conversations.

Change Agents

San José State University, San José City College, West Valley College, Ohlone College, Foothill-De Anza College, Milpitas Unified School District, East Side Union High School District, San José Unified School District, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, The Tech Interactive, Sobrato Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, JFF

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Featured Resources

[Not Just Another College-to-Career Initiative: Advancing Equity and Economic Prosperity Through California Regional Collaboratives](#)

EXAMPLE 4 (CONT.)

Centering Student Participation in Regional Education Pathway Initiatives

- **Prioritize youth voice at the beginning of the design process:** It is important to plan and implement a youth engagement and inclusion strategy before convening institutional leaders so that youth voices are central to the conversation and not seen as an afterthought or tokenized. Youth voice in the strategic planning process reoriented the thinking and strategic direction of the Collaborative. Dedicate time and resources to organizing focus groups, building capacity, and gathering direct input from youth early in the design process.
- **Address power dynamics:** Inherent power differences come into play when youth work side by side with institutional and community leaders. Organizations or cross-sector groups should examine how leaders will set the tone to address these dynamics continually. The Collaborative attempted to facilitate young people's active participation by utilizing a combination of small group discussions that included student and adult leaders as well as youth-led presentations.

Change Agents

Fresno Business Council (FBC), Career Nexus, San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance (SJVMA), Fresno Stewardship Foundation, Heartland Compass, Central Valley Community Foundation

Context

The [Fresno Business Council](#) was formed in 1993 by business leaders with a commitment to affect real change in their community.¹⁵ They aimed at Fresno's most complex economic and social issues, including workforce and community development, diversification of the economy, sustainability, and stewardship. FBC members have taken a unique approach. They invest in their "inner journey" by learning how to change the way they think and work together to advance the whole community. They have adopted a set of community values like truth telling, conflict resolution, and power parity to guide their approach to enacting lasting change. These values underlay efforts associated with the Fresno Business Council, including [Career Nexus](#), which was incubated through the [Fresno DRIVE](#) process.¹⁶

Theory of Change

Creating a cross-sector network of civic stewards with shared community values will advance the greater good if all sectors commit and the private sector is directly involved in the design, execution, and funding of community solutions.

Featured Resources

[Career Nexus: Much More Than Job Training or Intern Placement](#)¹⁷

[Organization Evolved: Introducing Holacracy](#)¹⁸

[Stewardship Is Serious Business](#)¹⁹

[Who Is SJVMA?](#)²⁰

EXAMPLE 5

Galvanizing Business Leadership Through Civic Stewardship

Region

San Joaquin Valley

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Personalize the work:** FBC intentionally takes a "citizen-first" approach to employer engagement and leadership development. This requires business leaders to examine their social conditioning and personal limitations to focus on advancing the whole community.
- **Bring in business bridge builders:** Organizations like the FBC and SJVMA were key leaders in Fresno DRIVE by bringing in business owners who served as a bridge between employers, education leaders, and community members. When engaging employers in regional

planning and implementation efforts, it is essential to partner with organizational leaders who have the lived experience of starting and managing a private enterprise. These trusted messengers can effectively drive employer investment by showing participation in these efforts aligns with their values and bottom line.

- **Authentic industry engagement takes time, trust, and results:** Uniting the business community around shared values and vision creates a foundation to enact tactical plans, like setting up internships, sector excellence, and supporting employees. It also helps guide regional coalitions to address the ecosystem needs of businesses, including land use, permitting, transportation infrastructure, and regulatory environment.

Change Agents

LeadersUp

Context

With persistent systemic oppression so deeply woven into the current economy, the racial wealth gap has continued to grow in recent decades. Anti-racism calls for an increased awareness of race and racism, encouraging us to combat racial inequalities actively in our daily interactions. Misunderstanding and misinformation have led some to believe an anti-racist economy would only serve a cross-section of society rather than unlocking greater economic mobility and prosperity for all. To create an economy that serves everyone requires normalizing psychological safety, sharing power, and ensuring opportunities are accessible, particularly for communities who have been blocked from accessing education and career opportunities. LeadersUp, a talent development accelerator based in Los Angeles, aims to change the narrative around the racial wealth gap by collaborating with companies and organizations to create equal opportunities, particularly for young talent from diverse backgrounds across the state and the country.

Theory of Change

To build an anti-racist economy, our workforce ecosystem must empower the next generation of inclusive leaders and build proximity with committed employers.

Featured Resources

[About LeadersUp](#)²¹

EXAMPLE 6

Building an Anti-Racist Economy by Bridging the Gap Between Youth and Employers

Region

Los Angeles Metro Area

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Work with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)**

champions: Companies authentically dedicated to DEI can play a more impactful role in talent development initiatives compared to those opposed to or indifferent about more inclusive approaches. LeadersUp collaborates with companies and organizations exhibiting clear dedication to DEI initiatives, including allocating specific budget and staff resources as well as paying a living wage.

- **Listen to young people:** Being explicit about anti-racism as a goal requires hearing directly from the individuals most affected by our detrimental economic and social systems and understanding how they want to reimagine our economy. LeadersUp employs engagement tools like surveys to learn what is important to young people and what narratives they want to tell and uses this data to inform program design.
- **Build connections between managers and staff members:** Building proximity between employer decision makers and communities through direct interactions like mentorship can help humanize talent and drive practice change. LeadersUp creates opportunities for connections between frontline managers and staff members through support programs like career coaching.

Change Agents

North State Together, Shasta College, Shasta College Attainment and Innovation Lab for Equity (SCAILE), Reach Higher Shasta, Expect More Tehama, Advancing Modoc, Trinity Together Cradle to Career Partnership, Cradle 2 Careers 4 Siskiyou, Glenn 2 Greatness, Lassen Healthcare Education Collaborative, Plumas County, Butte County, Sierra Strong

Context

Far north California includes a mix of small to medium population centers, proximate but distinctive counties, and rural, often isolated towns. Almost 19% of families in the North State region have household incomes under the federal poverty level.²² The challenge of finding quality jobs prompts many to look for opportunities elsewhere. Political divides between residents can provide hurdles to coming together on questions of education and the economy, but a tradition of collective impact has also been born out of necessity.

Theory of Change

Better understanding the interconnectedness of education, health, and workforce development can lead to more impactful cross-sector collaboration driving equitable economic advancement.

Featured Resources

[About North State Together](#)²⁴

EXAMPLE 7

Accelerating Regional Economic Development Through a Focus on Educational Success

Region

North State

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Multiple points of intervention are necessary for change:** The link between educational access, regional wellness, and economic outcomes has been studied at length and is uniquely visible in rural areas.²³ Focusing on educational outcomes and viewing education itself as a continuum allows for interventions at multiple points across communities, beginning at birth and extending through K-12, college, and career. North State Together lives by this ethos and serves as a backbone for a network of county-based cross-sector partnerships, including 280 individual partners.
- **Community colleges are rural anchor institutions:** In rural areas, a community college may serve as one of the principal institutions and sometimes the only critical economic and community hub to balance the innovation required to support regional economic development, facilitate change management, and think creatively about career pathway opportunities. The lack of competition creates a regional or subregional need to respond to niche employer demands. Community colleges are pushed to establish themselves as centers of creativity and innovation to support academic, workforce, and community needs. As the only public postsecondary institution across its three-county service area and as one of two (also including College of the Siskiyous) in five counties, Shasta College serves extremely rural contexts and hosts North State Together.

Change Agents

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Theory of Change

Better understanding the interconnectedness of education, health, and workforce development can lead to more impactful cross-sector collaboration driving equitable economic advancement.

Featured Resources

[About North State Together](#)

EXAMPLE 7 (CONT.)

Accelerating Regional Economic Development Through a Focus on Educational Success

- **Data powers regional work:** Data-informed regional efforts manage against duplicate efforts. Rural regions are constantly rethinking where education may be offered through dual enrollment, credit for prior learning, flexible/predictable scheduling, childcare, and other strategies to meet learners where they are. To serve all Californians, no matter their context, requires robust DEI processes, authentic community participation, and innovative strategies to serve adult learners and other special populations. For example, North State Together looks at regional data but also offers county-level consultation on data related to academic and workforce outcomes as well as broadband accessibility, a key challenge for rural learners and families in accessing educational and workforce training opportunities.

Context

As the backbone convener for the Northern San Joaquin region's California Jobs First (formerly CERF) investment, North Valley Thrive has worked to unite three culturally diverse counties (Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin counties) that lack the shared infrastructure needed to work together cohesively as a region.

Theory of Change

Equipping stakeholders with the tools and learning spaces needed to develop a shared language and understanding of technical and cultural terms can allow voices from diverse backgrounds to participate meaningfully in regional economic development efforts.

Featured Resources

[About North Valley Thrive²⁵](#)

EXAMPLE 8

Aligning on Shared Language and Definitions for Inclusive Economic Planning

Region

North San Joaquin region

What are we learning from this effort?

- **Make sure everyone speaks the same language:** Economic development, like any specialized discipline, involves a lot of jargon and specialized knowledge. Through a curriculum and training called Thrive School, North Valley Thrive steering committee members can learn basic economic development concepts, creating an equal playing field for idea generation and discussion.
- **Place-based development requires a deep understanding of geography and culture:** Speaking the same language is about more than just alignment on technical terminology. Understanding a place's geographic and cultural nuances can be critical to effective collaboration. The Thrive School curriculum provides stakeholders with lessons about the unique elements of different parts of the three-county region, including institutions (schools, community anchors, etc.), industries, history, policies, and traditions.

Change Agents

OneFuture Coachella Valley

Context

For the past 19 years, OneFuture Coachella Valley has worked to ensure Coachella Valley students succeed in college, career, and life. As an intermediary, OneFuture connects partners across education, workforce, and industry to facilitate the Regional Plan for College and Career Success and leverage the funding sources released to support college and career pathway development, including California Career Pathways Trust, K-16 Education Collaboratives, and Golden State Pathways.

Theory of Change

Regional intermediaries that hold historical knowledge, catalyze trust, and nurture the cross-sector coordination of partners are critical to sustainable, long-term regional collaboration.

Featured Resources

[Impact Report 2023-2024](#)²⁶

[Ford NGL Community Structures: Profiles and Insights](#)²⁷

[Cultivating Systems Leadership in Cross-Sector Partnerships: Lessons from the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence](#)²⁸

[Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success](#)²⁹

EXAMPLE 9

Establishing Strong Intermediaries for Regional Workforce Efforts

Region

Coachella Valley

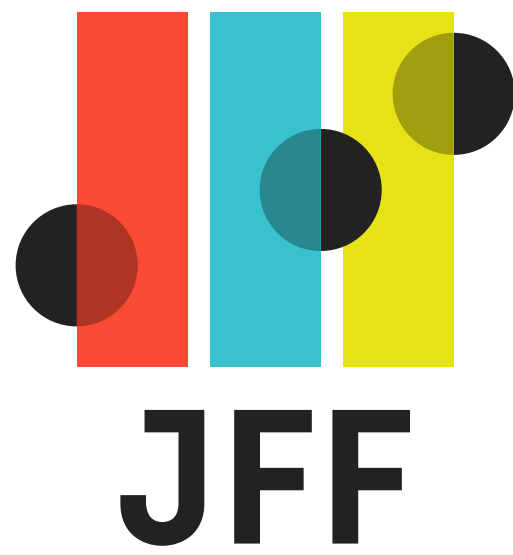
What are we learning from this effort?

- **Work as a network:** Embracing network collaboration principles can empower a region to develop both enduring infrastructure and sustainable practices that extend beyond a single funding opportunity. These principles are rooted in fostering relationships grounded in effective communication, trust, and shared mission alignment rather than being solely driven by funding requirements. They call for organizations to act together in harmony rather than isolation when pursuing new funding or program development to mitigate unnecessary competition.
- **Leadership continuity is critical for sustained impact:** To address leadership transitions at partner K-12 districts, colleges, or public agencies, OneFuture staff members provide onboarding, facilitate introductions, and foster relationship development to bring incoming leaders up to speed, ensuring that the larger regional vision remains consistent over time. Intermediaries that serve as a repository of historical and institutional knowledge can prevent regions from having to start over when new funding opportunities arise.
- **Take a people-first approach to funding:** Funds can be used most effectively when targeted to meeting the needs of a specific population or issue area rather than funding specific institutions or sectors. This “people-first” approach has allowed OneFuture to strategically secure funds for young people from first-generation and low-income backgrounds and for those who are disconnected from education and employment.

Endnotes

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