

# Our Salton Sea: Where Theory Meets Practice on Inclusive Economic Development

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Salton Sea, California, USA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to communities across the United States, and especially so for historically marginalized populations and regions. While governments at all levels have tried various means to address these inequities, many of these reforms have proven limited in changing deeply entrenched systems.

A look at the history of economic development clearly shows the persistence of structural factors that have disadvantaged communities of color. During the Great Recession of 2008 and the gradual recovery that followed, low-income workers had virtually no cushion to serve as a buffer to economic dislocation. During the COVID-19 downturn and recovery, workers from communities of color were more likely to face health and mortality risks from providing essential services, living in crowded and precarious housing, experiencing food insecurity, and facing the risk of excessive police force.

The current recovery provides a fresh opportunity to build new infrastructure and reform existing economic and social programs by embedding community inclusion and equity as core values. Instead of reverting back to “business as usual,” we have a valuable opportunity to embed community inclusion from the very beginning—with agreement and buy-in from government and industry partners alike—rather than structuring community benefit through redistribution at the tail end of a series of plans. Not only has the latter strategy largely failed with respect to delivering on equity, it has also often meant poor design and investment choices that harm the long-term success of projects and programs.

The Biden Administration’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) and California’s Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) are two examples of governments committing substantial sums of money to promote an inclusive economic recovery. As the intent and design of these initiatives indicate, inclusive economic recovery is more than simply making cash payments to households or allocating stimulus dollars to jurisdictions. It requires understanding the economic and social contexts that produce and support particular kinds of jobs and business enterprises, including the availability of affordable child care, housing, and transportation that enables residents to work in a sustainable and equitable manner.

Inclusive economic development also entails doing much better on community inclusion in decision-making. This means not only inviting in but also listening to, learning from, and respecting the perspectives of experts in local communities and local economies—including residents and workers who have firsthand knowledge of benefits as well as challenges, and

barriers as well as solutions. Perhaps most fundamentally, inclusive recoveries are not simply the immediate result of bouncing-back from an economic crisis; they are the backbone of sustainable, resilient, and vibrant economies.

This policy brief provides guidance on frameworks and tools that can accelerate progress towards a more inclusive economic recovery. It is based, in part, on the first of three reports on inclusive economic development in the Salton Sea region of inland Southern California, authored by the University of California Santa Cruz Institute for Social Transformation. The Institute’s report, *Salton Sea Initiative: Measuring and Developing Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Economies* analyzes several frameworks related to building inclusive and sustainable economies, and proposes a framework and set of inclusive economy indicators for the Salton Sea region. This brief also draws on Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor’s forthcoming book, *Solidarity Economics*, which maps out the possibilities for a new model of economic development that has mutuality and interdependence at its core, as well as the Center for Social Innovation’s Ready to RISE framework, which was developed in partnership with community organizations and lays out a detailed and pragmatic set of indicators to track progress on resilience, inclusion, sustainability, equity.

Because the Biden and Newsom administrations have backed their aspirations for inclusive and equitable recovery with new programs and grants, now is the time to act. Communities have an unprecedented opportunity to leverage these administrative priorities, and policy-makers are presented with a prime opportunity to make good on their stated commitments to respecting and helping their communities. Community inclusion is also sound economic policy: communities of color have long been excluded from the proverbial table, and economic growth has suffered as a result. With a consumer base and labor force that continues to diversify, it is vital for regions to rapidly gain expertise in community inclusion in order to ensure their long-term economic success.

## MOTIVATION

The health and economic consequences of COVID-19 have been devastating to many communities in the United States and around the world, and the effects have been particularly severe in communities that have been historically disenfranchised and marginalized. Recent scholarship has sought to more clearly understand the impact of social and economic policy on wealth inequality and long-term developmental stressors. For example, seminal research by Raj Chetty and colleagues (2017) on the American Dream show that economic



mobility has been almost cut in half from the 1940s to the 1980s. This means that while most children in the 1940s were doing better than their parents' generation, the same no longer holds true. Why is this the case? Chetty et al. (2017) suggest that, while economic growth is a main factor, this growth needs to be broadened to encompass the entire income distribution, and not simply viewed in the aggregate. Others have similarly pointed out the harmful economic consequences of wealth and income inequality, not only for the well-being of disenfranchised populations but also for overall economic growth and social well being (Cingano, 2014; Benner et al., 2018; Pacetti, 2016; Benner & Pastor, 2015).

Countries and states have utilized various methods to address these inequities through redistribution of income or wealth, whether through traditional means of progressive taxation and safety net provisions or through newer methods such as guaranteed income and "baby bond" funds. In addition to redistribution, however, we also need to consider how economic decisions are made in the first place, and ways that inclusionary processes generate more equitable outcomes from the earliest possible stages of economic development (Thorpe and Gaventa, 2020). In their recent book, Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor (2021) have proposed an approach called "solidarity economics", which emphasizes the ability of collaboration and mutuality to achieve greater prosperity for all. In particular, this approach recognizes that equity and economics do not have to be trade-offs, and instead can leverage each other. But how do we get there in practice? Their root argument is that our economy works better and policymakers can make better decisions when marginalized community members are included and empowered as much as possible. This means not only opening up opportunities for community expertise, but also ensuring the successful incorporation of that community expertise by investing in grassroots organizations and movements for equity.

## REGIONAL MOTIVATION

The Salton Sea region of Southern California was once a top leisure destination for the wealthy and famous. Today, the contrast could hardly be more striking, as the region has high levels of concentrated poverty, polluted environments, and some of the worst community health metrics in the state. For instance, a review of the CalEnviroScreen scores for the region (see Figure 1), shows that areas in Eastern Coachella Valley and Imperial Valley surrounding the Salton Sea generally have scores of 49 and higher.

CalEnviroScreen scores are a combination of pollution burden (weighted average of exposures and

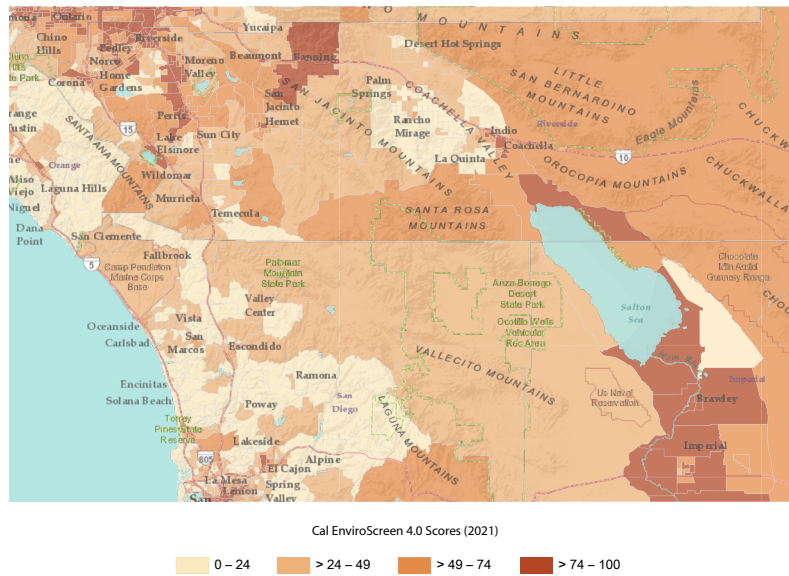
environmental effects) and population characteristics (including health and poverty indicators), where higher scores indicate an area where populations experience higher environmental burdens. Policymakers often look to such areas as prime candidates for regional equity efforts. However, there has been a long history of policies, programs, and initiatives—all done in the name of community economic development—that have effectively taken the "community" component for granted and failed to deliver on the promises of long-term benefits for distressed regions and marginalized groups.

The Salton Sea region's economy is largely driven by low-wage industries including agriculture, retail, and hospitality. Jobs in healthcare offer the potential for economic mobility, but that potential has been limited by insufficient public investments in healthcare delivery and the underfunding of in-home care and community health programs. Finally, emerging developments in energy and manufacturing, such as solar power generation and a growing lithium extraction industry, offer some promise of economic growth and good jobs. However, local community organizations and residents have not yet been granted any significant input or influence over decisions pertaining to economic development or workforce development.

Although there is a significant history of worker organizing in the Coachella Valley—in May 1965, Larry Itliong and Ben Gines successfully organized a strike among Filipino farmworkers in Coachella Valley, then moved up to the Central Valley's Delano region where they joined forces with Cesar Chavez to form the United Farm Workers (UFW)—labor organizing has since remained relatively weak. Additionally, the presence of higher educational institutions in the Salton Sea region is at a significantly smaller scale than in nearby cities such as Riverside and San Diego, and the region has comparatively few opportunities for economic mobility. Finally, Imperial County has the highest unemployment rate in California (19.4% in August 2021, according to the state's Employment Development Department), and has suffered from the highest COVID-19 death rates in the state, at more than twice the statewide average (New York Times, 2021).

Recent prospects of increased investment and development in the Salton Sea region—from expanded geothermal plants, proposed lithium extraction, battery manufacturing and associated regional infrastructure projects, among others—bring the region a fresh opportunity, to chart a different future on inclusive economic development that can serve as a model for other rural areas across the country. This new model of "building back better" will require significant investments and changes in mindsets and behavior among public and private institutions operating in the region: from federal,

**FIGURE 1: ECONOMICALLY & ENVIRONMENTALLY DISTRESSED AREAS OF INLAND SOUTHERN CA**



Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0 of the area adjacent to and surrounding the Salton Sea

state, and county government agencies responsible for economic development, workforce development, education, housing, health, and transportation, to large corporations such as Berkshire Hathaway Energy and regional economic actors including economic development corporations and local business associations. Absent significant investments and intentional efforts towards community inclusion, the region’s future economic development risks replaying the horrible history of resource extraction across the world, with local communities pushed aside and subordinated in the name of economic progress.

**RESEARCH ON INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES**

Community inclusion is essential for producing equitable economic development in the Salton Sea region. In this context, we define equitable development as whether investments, policies, and practices intentionally focus on improving outcomes among historically marginalized populations, and whether outcomes actually improve for those populations.

From the beginning, local community members need to be not only consulted, but empowered to express their options and to make consequential decisions. Often, economic development plans are made with input from a select group of stakeholders, leaving out the broader community. In many instances, broader community engagement occurs only after the most consequential decisions have already been made. Thus, for example, developers and planning commissions often invite community feedback when plans have already been drawn, as opposed to consulting them in earlier stages of design. While the typical rationale for keeping community

input at bay is that it is too time consuming, disruptive, or expensive, this type of fuller community inclusion can actually lead to better project decisions, and save time and money by including communities as partners and experts, rather than as spoilers and adversaries. The latter stance often ends up being a self-fulfilling prophecy, with lawsuits and protests that delay projects or force developers to abandon them altogether. By contrast, if an enterprise truly understands the community’s assets, needs, and behaviors, it can tailor development in ways that are better designed, anticipating and fulfilling the needs of local communities and earning their strong support in the face of challenges such as project setbacks, as well as opportunities such as grant opportunities in private philanthropy as well as from federal and state government agencies.

The following sections of this policy brief include frameworks, best practices, and recommendations to facilitate community inclusion and creating equitable economic development. It also offers some helpful indicators to aid in assessing inclusion and equity in economic development. These elements are applicable for any type of economic development, beyond the Salton Sea region.

The challenges and contradictions of creating truly inclusive economic development are well documented by practitioners and researchers alike. With new efforts to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and equitable development on the rise, it is essential that new development projects consider these measures and indicators to avoid community exclusion, social hardship and ecological degradation.

## INDICATORS OF INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

Critical assessment of the possibilities, challenges and potential contradictions of inclusive economies in the Salton Sea context necessitates delineating what constitutes inclusion in the first place. A forthcoming white paper published by the University of California Santa Cruz Institute for Social Transformation analyzes literature on inclusive economies, including what indicators could be used by key stakeholders to track progress toward creating an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economy.

The authors, Nate Edenhofer and Alejandro Artiga-Purcell, summarize the vast literature on inclusive economy and sustainable development frameworks. Understanding what makes an inclusive economy different from other economies, and why inclusive economies are desirable, requires a bit of historical context. Two primary framings influence the authors' analysis—the Sustainable Development framework and more recent Inclusive Economy Framework developed by Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor (2015, 2016). Each framework places varying emphasis on the central importance of environmental sustainability, equity, social well-being, economic growth and stability.

The authors review inclusive economy frameworks such as the ones developed by Benner et al. (2018) (see Figure 2), and compile a list of indicators to measure and track key elements that are similar to rural economies and societies such as the Salton Sea region. The authors take care to note that it will be important to “ground truth” these initial indicators, and to co-create them in meaningful participation with the region’s most impacted stakeholders. The authors also do not intend the work to be a definitive checklist of “the only” or “best” indicators. Rather, it is an effort to highlight key features of various theoretical frameworks for inclusive economic development and catalyzing discussions about how to measure and promote it.

Edenhofer and Artiga-Purcell identify five broad indicator categories, with eleven sub-indicator categories (Figure 4). They define Equity as inclusive of reductions in inequality as well as opportunities for upward mobility; Inclusion as community participation in market-based economies and in economic decision-making; Growth/Stability as involving dignified work opportunities for all and job stability over time; Socio-Ecological health as involving ecological health as well as community health; and Transportation/Access to Development as involving access to housing and transportation infrastructure that reduces burdens for workers and households alike.

The full report, to be released in January 2022 and which includes the white paper findings, analyzes how each framework relates to building an inclusive and sustainable economy, in general and more specifically in the Salton Sea region. Importantly, the 2022 report will “ground truth” the frameworks based on community and stakeholder expertise in the Salton Sea region. In this context, the term ground truthing is used to describe the process of gathering data or information directly from local communities and/or individuals “on the ground.” It will be accompanied by a partner report released from the Center for Social Innovation at UC Riverside (CSI-UCR), based on a series of interviews, focus groups, and listening sessions, that analyze in practice the kinds of inclusionary processes needed to ensure equitable economies from the earliest aspect of project and systems design, to their resourcing, implementation, evaluation, and responsive adaptation.

Our teams held an initial community partner listening session on October 12, 2021, to explore the local community’s views on inclusive economic development and good jobs in the Salton Sea region. There were some interesting findings from that initial session which will help to guide and refine our research. A prime example of this is that several participants flagged the importance of encouraging and facilitating the creation of more micro-enterprises, entrepreneurship, and small businesses in the region. This is an area of focus that was not highlighted by our initial research. We also gained insight into local government program outreach and support and career pathway programs in high schools. This “on the ground knowledge” is essential because it is timely and aids in creating a more holistic view of the economic and social landscape in the region.

## THE “READY TO RISE” FRAMEWORK

Having a standardized framework in place can also help provide greater clarity and accountability for post-pandemic projects, initiatives, and investments. The Ready to RISE Framework (Figure 5) developed by the Center for Social Innovation at the University of California Riverside has been a result of nearly two years of research and engagement that has enabled community organizations to field-test and refine various concepts and measures. This framework builds on the core notion of “shovel readiness,” and adds conceptual precision and measurability to notions of resilience, inclusion, sustainability, and equity that decision-makers often uphold as important priorities but remain vague on the details.

*Resilience* refers to the interconnected nature of system assets and processes, and how they can absorb, recover from, and continue on after some sort of a shock. It acknowledges that system shocks come in various

forms, and aims to create a contextual basis within which to both operate in the present as well as in the future. Metrics of resilience include adaptability, agility, self-sufficiency, and agency. Measures of economic resilience can include the growth, survival, and success of small businesses in a geographic area in response to various system shocks, while broader measures of community resilience can include change metrics related to population health and wellbeing, philanthropic investment, and availability of social services from public and private sources.

*Inclusion* refers to the extent that communities are recognized and meaningfully included in decisions, plans, programs, and projects. Metrics of inclusion can be made with respect to breadth (by geography, race, gender, and other communities of interest), quality of inclusion (from marginalization, to tokenization, to subordinate partnership, to equal partnership), depth of inclusion (direct inclusion of community members versus mediation through representative leaders, organizations, and institutions), and stage of inclusion (brainstorm, vision, design, proposal development, resourcing, project implementation, learning and evaluation, project and proposal redesign).

*Sustainability* refers to the conditions that promote individual and community health and well-being, through improvements in environment (air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, water access, ground surface temperatures, and indoor work and recreation temperatures), quality of life (such as reductions in commute times, increased opportunities for recreation, increased opportunities for civic engagement), and economic stability (smoothing of boom-and-bust cycles, adequate wages to meet costs of living). It also aims to contextualize the impact of various actions/processes within the past, present, and future time-frames, and how these various impacts push and pull on one another. In particular, it pushes the notion of scope, to encompass historical context, present understanding, and future aspirations/impacts.

*Equity* refers to whether investments, policies, and practices intentionally focus on improving outcomes among historically marginalized populations, and whether outcomes actually improve for those populations. Thus, measures of equity can include process measures of intention—such as whether proposals explicitly include a recognition of disparate outcomes among historically marginalized populations in project and program designs, and also explicitly include plans for tracking and accountability with respect to improving outcomes among those populations—as well as regular and updated measures of outcome improvements among historically marginalized groups.

Finally, *Readiness* refers to a community's workforce and infrastructural readiness, with respect to receiving new investments and completing projects in a timely manner. Workforce readiness measures can include the number of established and recent graduates (high school, community college, four-year college) in the region, trade certifications in various fields, rates of new job listings by sector, and labor force participation, and unemployment by race, gender, and sub-region. Infrastructural readiness, by contrast, examines the availability of resources ranging from broadband, to commercial space, permit rules and capacity, as well as government and nonprofit support on workforce, child care, parking, transportation, housing, and recreational land use necessary to attract and maintain particular types of economic activity and workforce.

This framework will be increasingly important as funds from legislation, tied to President Biden's Build Back Better agenda, filter down to the state level. Any projects or initiatives that receive funding should be not merely "shovel" ready, but "Ready to RISE" utilizing metrics and standards for resilience, inclusion, sustainability, and equity.

## STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES TO DEVELOP INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

Frameworks and measurable indicators are important for various stakeholders to gain agreement on common goals and metrics for success. They do not presuppose particular strategies or agreements, which may be seen as a strength in the initial stages of stakeholder agreement. When it comes to implementation, however, it is vital for stakeholders to have agreements on approaches and agreements, and policies and investments, that will enable regions to grow in a stronger and more equitable manner.

In their book *Solidarity Economics: Why Mutuality and Movements Matter*, Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor (2021) propose a framework that centers the importance of mutuality and collaboration—in contrast to competition—as the central component of increased and equitable economic prosperity. This framework also includes the importance of movements to pressure for the inclusion necessary for relations of mutuality to take hold. In particular, the mutuality and collaboration concept relies on acknowledging that there are not in fact any "natural laws" of competition that shape markets; instead, markets are shaped by our laws and values. When mutuality becomes the center of economic life, it can increase prosperity in several ways, including increases in productivity because people have a sense

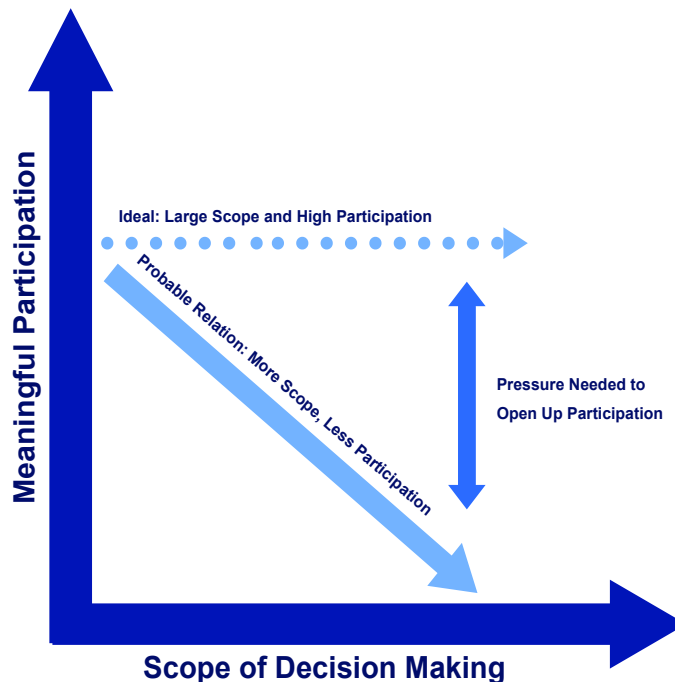


**FIGURE 2: INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES INDICATOR FRAMEWORK**

<p><b>INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES</b></p> <p><i>Expand opportunities for more broadly shared prosperity, especially for those facing the greatest barriers to advancing their well-being.</i></p>	<b>EQUITABLE</b>	A. Upward mobility for all.	<p>Experiences of historically marginalized populations</p> <p>Distribution of power</p>
		B. Reduction of inequality.	
		C. Equal access to public goods and ecosystem services.	
	<b>PARTICIPATORY</b>	D. People are able to access and participate in markets as workers, consumers, and business owners.	
		E. Decision-making transparency and accountability.	
		F. Widespread technology infrastructure for the betterment of all.	
	<b>GROWING</b>	G. Increasing good job and work opportunity.	
		H. Improving material well-being.	
		I. Economic transformation for the betterment of all.	
	<b>SUSTAINABLE</b>	J. Social and economic well-being is increasingly sustained over time.	
		K. Greater investments in environmental health and reduced natural resource usage.	
		L. Decision-making processes incorporating long-term costs.	
		M. Public and private confidence in the future and ability to predict outcome of economic decisions.	
	<b>STABLE</b>	N. Members of society are able to invest in their future.	
		O. Economic resilience to shocks and stresses.	

Source: Benner et al. (2018, iv)

**FIGURE 3: INTERACTION BETWEEN SCOPE OF DECISION MAKING AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION**



Source: Edenhofer and Artiga-Purcell, 2021



**FIGURE 4: PROPOSED SALTON SEA INCLUSIVE ECONOMY INDICATOR FRAMEWORK**

	<b>Broad Indicators</b>	<b>Sub-Indicators</b>
<b>Salton Sea Region Inclusive Economy Indicator Framework</b>	1. EQUITY	Upward Mobility
		Reduction of Inequality
	2. INCLUSION	Participation in Markets
		Decision-making
	3. GROWTH/STABILITY	Work Opportunity
		Stability
		Dignified Work
	4. SOCIOLOGICAL HEALTH	Ecological Health
		Community Health
	5. ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY	Commute
		Transportation, Affordable Housing & Infrastructure


*Source: Edenhofer and Artiga-Purcell, 2021*

**FIGURE 5: READY TO RISE FRAMEWORK**

Ready to RISE Framework	Definition
Resilience	Refers to the interconnected nature of system assets and processes, and how they can absorb, recover from, and continue on after some sort of a shock. See Table 1A for more detailed measures.
Inclusion	Refers to the extent that communities are recognized and meaningfully included in decisions, plans, programs, and projects. Includes measures of breadth, depth, and stage of inclusion (see Table 1B).
Sustainability	Refers to the conditions that promote individual and community health and well-being, through improvements in environment, quality of life, and economic stability. See Table 1C for more detailed measures.
Equity	Refers to whether investments, policies, and practices intentionally focus on improving outcomes among historically marginalized populations, and whether outcomes actually improve for those populations. See Table 1D for more detailed measures.
Readiness	Refers to the measurement of a community's workforce and infrastructural readiness, with respect to receiving new investments and completing projects in a timely manner.

Source: Center for Social Innovation, University of California, Riverside.

**FIGURE 6: THE SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To inform the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Source: International Association for Public Participation

of ownership. This extends to other aspects of society as well, like health, clean water, housing, and political inclusion, to name a few.

Mutuality and collaboration both require that individuals are first able to have a seat at the economic development table, and then have enough power to be taken seriously. Thus the proposed strategies fall into two main categories. The first, participation outside of pre-existing channels, is most often utilized by excluded and marginalized groups in order to directly confront inequality and redistribute power. This is getting a seat at the table. The second is creating collaboratives, which incorporates strategies where individuals are already at the table, or new ways to build community wealth (e.g., anchor-institution strategies or participatory budgeting). For either to work, however, communities need to have their voices heard, as this does not happen automatically.

However, how do we know that participation is actually meaningful? Increased mutuality can produce greater prosperity, and it is important to leverage policy to establish further mutuality. Given that any inclusive economy should include the participation of the people that live within it, and that many of the economic development strategies presented rely on participation as well, it is important to recognize that all participation is not the same.

Participation ranges on a spectrum from being simply a token gesture to true community control. But what is also important is the scope of participation. Having meaningful participation around trivial matters does little to promote true inclusion. The greater the scope of decisions being made or programs being implemented, the more important pushing for meaningful participation becomes, as represented in Figure 6.

The Spectrum of Public Participation (Figure 6) includes five general modes of participation that fall on a progressive continuum of increasing public influence over decision-making in a civic-engagement process. Created by the Internal Association for Public Participation, this framework is widely accepted and utilized by planners. This kind of framework can help community groups define and determine the public's role in a democratic decision-making process.

The strategies explored need to be taken as pieces of a larger push to democratize and build equitable prosperity. There is no silver bullet for inclusive economies, but rather this needs to be built from many endeavors that incorporate as many members of the economy as possible.

## COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION & THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Key to these themes and frameworks are collective participation and action. This type of collective participation helps to shift the power balance from government back into the hands of the community. For example, Benner and Pastor (2021) suggest that the government should be a partner in creating the structures and support for communities to create their own solutions. In addition, mutuality is key for collective economic well-being. In general communities do better when they work together, not competing for limited resources. An example of this is minimum wage increases. The authors note that increases in the minimum wage have often been accused of causing unemployment. However, data shows that workers who earn more spend more, and much of that income is spent locally.

Due to the inequities and biases of current systemic structures which generally only benefit a small group of stakeholders, social movements are essential for change. If communities can act in solidarity both economically and politically, real and lasting change can occur.

## RELEVANCE TO CURRENT INITIATIVES

Equitable and inclusive economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding opportunities for low-income people and communities of color. Through vehicles like accountable public action and investment, this type of development can grow quality jobs and increase entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth (Treuhaft, Scoggins, and Tran 2014). Beyond being just, it is important to note that equitable and inclusive economic development can benefit everyone as more people participate in the economy. For example, a 2014 study found that the national economy stands to grow \$2.1 trillion every year from racial equity, and that every region in the country would gain millions per year (Treuhaft, Scoggins, Tran 2014).

In terms of current initiatives that promote inclusive economic development, we highlight the Biden Administration's Build Back Better plan, and the recently passed Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) in California.

## BUILD BACK BETTER REGIONAL CHALLENGE -

As part of the Biden Administration's efforts to promote a more sustainable future, the Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) of the American Rescue

Plan aims to accelerate post-COVID economic recovery that will be resilient to future economic shocks. The BBBRC will provide economic investment into 20-30 regions nationwide, with opportunities to grow new industry clusters or scale existing ones. This particular federal initiative is unique in that it provides the funds in two phases, with \$500,000 each in technical assistance for up to 60 regional coalitions to develop proposals and strengthen coalitions to develop transformational projects in an inclusive manner, and up to \$100 million each for project implementation.

The inclusion frameworks in this policy brief are particularly important for such large-scale initiatives. Not only are inclusive coalitions more likely to deliver on economic mobility and equity, they are also more likely to produce stronger project designs by incorporating and empowering the voices of diverse stakeholder perspectives, including those of affected workers, households, and communities. In order to ensure that federal agencies make good on the promise of “building back better,” it will be important to have detail and transparency in the scoring of initial proposals on inclusive processes as well as equitable outcomes, and to be able to differentiate between superficial consultation and deeper collaboration (Figure 6) as well as breadth and depth of inclusion at various project phases (Table 1B) prior to guidance for Phase Two funding.

## COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCE FUND

In its FY22 Budget, the State of California established a Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF). According to relevant bill language (California Dept of Finance, 2021), CERF provides funding to “establish and support high road transition collaboratives in designing region- and industry-specific economic recovery and transition strategies.” This would be implemented by providing “planning grants to establish and support at least one collaborative per region in areas that have had disproportionate impacts due to COVID-19 and would provide implementation grants on a rolling and competitive basis to fund economic recovery” and additionally provides outcome and reporting requirements.

In particular, the program is also structured to “support transparent and inclusive processes for shared problem solving to advance long-term prosperity and equity.” Key to this approach is bill language that stipulates that the collaboratives shall include balanced representation from “labor, business, community, government, and other stakeholders, including, but not limited to, education, philanthropy, and workforce partners.”

Here again, the inclusion frameworks outlined earlier play a key role. Because of the specific nature of the

CERF funds—to support high-road transition strategies—inclusion and equity are key, but so too are sustainability goals connected with jobs that ensure community resilience and climate resilience. One of the major opportunities here is for communities to better understand and leverage their existing assets (including physical and civic infrastructure, and human and social capital), and to generate strategies that can credibly produce high-quality jobs that also meet sustainability goals. Practically speaking, this can take the form of proposal guidance and evaluation metrics in line with the Ready to RISE framework for both planning grants as well as project funding. In addition, California has the opportunity to strengthen and expand the field of inclusive regional development, by providing detailed feedback and learning communities to all applicants, regardless of whether or not they are successful in obtaining funding in either phase.

## RECOMMENDATIONS/BEST PRACTICES

Inclusion and equity are concepts that are of concern to policymakers, though what exactly they mean in practice and how they can be used to better inform decisions remains open to debate. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the reckoning over ongoing struggles for racial equity in a variety of contexts have added urgency to matters of inclusion and equity. The past year has also brought to the fore the importance of resilience and sustainability.

Drawing on an array of inclusive economy and sustainable development literature and case studies, the Institute for Social Transformation report analyzed strategies in three broad categories. The report focuses on strategies for existing industries and unequal economic conditions in the region, and also strategies involving new large scale investments. Below are recommendations toward defining, tracking, and building inclusive economies in the latter scenario.

## INCLUSION IN LARGE-SCALE INVESTMENTS

There are several challenges to achieving inclusive development through major projects, including extractive industries like lithium. While the technology proposed for lithium extraction in the Salton Sea region is expected to be ecologically safer than the processes used elsewhere, some amount of ecological risk comes from any extractive industry. Other challenges include the mismatch of labor markets and job locations due to industry practices of hiring long distance commuters. This means that often local residents receive all of the negative externalities, but without the benefits like employment. Below are strategies for ensuring inclusive development amid new large scale investments.



## LABOR/COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Ensuring local employment may require community strategies due to the spatial labor market mismatch. One strategy is community organizing around new large scale investments, which has in several contexts been the only way to ensure agreements around local employment and environmental regulation. Meaningful community participation in setting goals as well as action is crucial for this. Another strategy is participatory monitoring and evaluation, which effectively involves residents instead of just professional experts in monitoring the ecological or social effects of an industry or program, and ultimately setting goals. This approach is particularly key because it is based on including disadvantaged groups into the conversation as opposed to relying solely on corporate-led discussions. While community driven strategies are often difficult to implement, they have often been the only way to get a seat at the table, and ensure that there are other voices than just the firms that operate major projects.

## BUSINESS SECTOR STRATEGIES

Business sector strategies focus on addressing the potential for agglomeration economies to form outwards from a mega project. Because it is difficult to bring backwards and forwards linkages into the economy, coordination rather than market forces will be necessary for related enterprises to form in the region. Other challenges include resident exclusion from industry cluster benefits and unexpected challenges from large investments (like housing shortages and displacement). In general, strategies to address these issues focus on how to prepare for the failure of free-market approaches to produce linkages.

## PUBLIC SECTOR STRATEGIES

Public sector strategies focus on how governments can bring benefits to local areas. An example of local regulatory leverage is how local and regional governments control zoning. Another example is the use of project labor agreements with community workforce agreements (e.g., union hiring, mandatory amounts of local and disadvantaged hires, job training to support workforce development) for large scale projects. Power is a large component of these public sector strategies, and thus public participation is a critical component to actual community buy-in.

When it comes to implementing a new framework of solidarity economics or other similar frameworks of deeply inclusive economic development, there is no “one size fits all” approach. Solutions in this vein may be particularly challenging in places like the Salton Sea region, which do not have a strong history or tradition

of community inclusion in major economic decisions. Transformative solutions to “build back better” will be a complex undertaking, as many parts of the economy will need to shift from a longstanding status quo, and towards a new economic reality that values the expertise of residents and grassroots community organizations, in addition to leaders in government agencies and business associations. In order for these transformations to take hold, communities like the Salton Sea region will require sizable and consistent investments in movement building, as well as consistent commitments among existing decision makers and power holders to include, empower, and value the expertise of residents, households, communities, and community-serving organizations.

As a final note, it is important for projects to commit to inclusion and equity through all stages of the process, from when an idea is initially conceptualized (with origins in government agencies or among industry or community stakeholders) to when it is planned, resourced, implemented, and evaluated (see Table 1B). Standards and key performance indicators such as those outlined in this document can help coalition partners stay true to their stated commitments. Funding opportunities that are designed to serve the public good, whether from government or philanthropic sources, should embed as many of these standards and performance indicators as possible, to ensure that “building back better” is not merely a slogan but a set of clearly defined ideals that are matched by the accountability of implementation.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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**TABLE 1A: READY TO RISE FRAMEWORK INDICATORS & STAGES - RESILIENCE**

COMPONENTS OF RESILIENCE	Description	N/A	None	Low	Medium	High	Notes on Scoring
<b>Recognition</b>	Stage 1. Recognition of the categories and groups that are priorities for resilience (tracking, investing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can be scored by level of intentionality, breadth, and depth
	Stage 2. Prioritization of issues/ categories and entities outlined in stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Flexibility</b>	The internally-oriented ability of projects and programs, including associated assets, actors, and coalitions, to easily change strategies, investments, and programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None: No evidence (quantitative or qualitative, using administrative, survey, or interview data) of capacity on this dimension  Low: Evidence of low capacity on this dimension, using objective or perceptual measures  Medium: Evidence of medium capacity on this dimension, using objective or perceptual measures  High: Evidence of medium capacity on this dimension, using objective or perceptual measures
<b>Adaptability</b>	The externally-oriented ability of projects and programs, including associated assets, actors, and coalitions, to effectively respond to changing situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Agility</b>	The ability of projects and programs to quickly move from one situation to another	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Self-sufficiency</b>	The ability of projects and programs to be self-reliant with respect to human, technical, or monetary resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Agency</b>	The ability of program or project actors to take charge of a situation in ways that increase responsiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**TABLE 1B: READY TO RISE FRAMEWORK INDICATORS & STAGES - INCLUSION**

COMPONENTS OF INCLUSION	Description	N/A	None	Low	Medium	High	Notes on Scoring
<b>Recognition</b>	Stage 1: Recognition of the categories and groups that are priorities for inclusion (tracking, investing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can be scored by level of intentionality, breadth, and depth
	Stage 2. Prioritization of issues/ categories and entities outlined in stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Breadth of Inclusion</b>	By Geography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None: no diversity on the dimension  Low: some diversity of impacted communities and advocates  Medium: moderate level of diversity, some key communities left out  High: all relevant communities meaningfully engaged
	By Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Disability Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Youth Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
By Other Social Categories meaningful to the context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Depth of Inclusion</b>	Direct inclusion of affected populations and stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can be measured by the number of proportion of different stakeholders represented or directly included.
	Representative inclusion (those representing affected stakeholders)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Stage of Inclusion</b>	Brainstorm Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None: adversely impacted communities and advocates not invited  Low: invited, but tokenized or marginalized  Medium: recognition of community expertise, opportunities to express insights  High: equally prioritized, fully respected and valued for expertise
	Vision Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Design Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Proposal Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Resourcing Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Implementation Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Learning and Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Reform / Redesign Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Source: Center for Social Innovation, University of California, Riverside.

**TABLE 1C: READY TO RISE FRAMEWORK INDICATORS & STAGES - SUSTAINABILITY**

COMPONENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY	Description	N/A	None	Low	Medium	High	Notes on Scoring
<b>Recognition</b>	Stage 1. Recognition of the categories and groups that are priorities for sustainability (tracking, investing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can be scored by level of intentionality, breadth, and depth
	Stage 2. Prioritization of issues/ categories and entities outlined in stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Promotes Health and Wellness Through Environmental Improvements</b>	Local air quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: not affected by this project/ investment
	Regional air quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Greenhouse gas emissions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None: no consideration of sustainability on this dimension
	Access to clean and affordable water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low: some consideration of sustainability, weak measures and accountability
	Water conservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium: moderate consideration of sustainability, moderate measures/ accountability
	Ground/surface temperatures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Indoor temperatures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	High: strong consideration to sustainability, strong measures/ accountability
	Mitigation of climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Promotes Health and Wellness Through Quality of Life Improvements</b>	Reductions in commute times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same as above
	Increases in opportunities for recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Increases in opportunities for community engagement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Promotes Health and Wellness Through Economic Improvements</b>	Wages and benefits to support households (individuals and families)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same as above
	Relies on mix of revenues to sustain jobs or benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Promotes Health and Wellness Through Other Improvements</b>	Provides enduring solution to problem (not temporary fix)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same as above
	Makes consistent progress towards achieving 100% vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Source: Center for Social Innovation, University of California, Riverside.



**TABLE 1D: READY TO RISE FRAMEWORK INDICATORS & STAGES - EQUITY**

COMPONENTS OF EQUITY	Description	N/A	None	Low	Medium	High	Notes on Scoring
<b>Recognition</b>	Stage 1. Recognition of the categories and groups that are priorities for equity (tracking, investing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can be scored by level of intentionality, breadth, and depth
	Stage 2. Prioritization of issues/ categories and groups outlined in stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Activities INTENTIONALLY FOCUSED on improving outcomes among historically disenfranchised populations</b>	By Geography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None: no presence or intentionality Low: some presence/ intentionality Medium: moderate presence/ intentionality High: high presence/ intentionality
	By Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Disability Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Youth Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Other Social Categories meaningful to the context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Outcomes ACTUALLY IMPROVE disproportionately among historically disenfranchised populations</b>	By Geography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None: no evidence of improved outcomes among target population Low: some evidence of improved outcomes among target population Medium: moderate improvements in outcomes among target population High: strong, enduring improvements in outcomes among target population
	By Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Disability Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Youth Status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	By Other Social Categories meaningful to the context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Source: Center for Social Innovation, University of California, Riverside.



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