



# San Diego Dialogue

## Overview

Formed in 1991 to address regional policy issues, the San Diego Dialogue is an entirely self-funded public policy organization part of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), Division of Extended Studies and Public Programs. The membership of the Dialogue is made up of a governing body of civic and business leaders. It currently has a membership of about 120 members, drawn from industry, government, the media, academic institutions and nonprofit organizations on both sides of the U.S. and Mexico border.

San Diego Dialogue attempts to advance solutions to the region's cross-border, long-term challenges in economy, environment and equity. The goal of the Dialogue is to improve the region's quality of life through cross-border development, smart growth and school reform.

## Regional Priorities

The San Diego region has three major challenges that affect the health of the region's economy, according to Scott Grimes, a Senior Policy Advisor at San Diego Dialogue. The first challenge is the ability of leaders from the business and civic communities to develop joint economic strategies with Baja California (Mexico) in order to address global economic issues. The San Diego region and Baja California continue to be strong trading partners and their economies are becoming increasingly integrated, resulting in a bi-national metropolitan region. In order for this bi-national partnership to continue growing, business and civic leaders on both sides of the border are looking for ways to improve the flow of goods across the border, upgrade the physical infrastructure as well as look for ways to better integrate San Diego firms' research and development to manufacturing in Baja California.

The second challenge the region is faced with is trying to maintain and improve its quality of life. Lately, the disparity in income between the highest income earners and lowest income earners has begun to widen. As a result, poverty has become more concentrated in the San Diego region over the last decade. Therefore, sustaining the regional quality of life has become

## ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

### Type of Organization

Multi-sector: Led by clear partnership of business, government, civic, academic and/or community leaders

### Unit of Membership

Individual

### Number of Members

2003: 175

1998: 100

### Membership by Company Size

Small Companies: 60%

Mid-sized Companies: 20%

Large Companies: 20%

### Dues Determined by

There are no dues; contributions from individual members are voluntary

### Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: N/A

Smallest Member Companies: N/A

### Annual Operating Budget

2003: \$500,000 to less than \$1 million

1998: \$500,000 to less than \$1 million

### Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 4

1998: 5

### Board Members

2003: 22

### Regional Priorities

Cross-Border Development; Smart Growth and Environmental Preservation; K-12 Education

a higher priority for business and civic leaders because they understand that in order to attract and retain skilled employees, the region must maintain a healthy quality of life for all.

#### FORUM FRONTERIZO

**In 1997, San Diego Dialogue established the Forum Fronterizo luncheon series in order to provide civic leaders with a venue to examine the major opportunities and challenges facing the San Diego-Baja California region. The theme for the 2003 Forum Fronterizo series was “Building Leadership on Cross-Border Priorities.”**

**San Diego Dialogue has also established a Forum Fronterizo Council, an influential civic association including prominent business representatives, community-based organizations, educational institutions and local government on both sides of the border. The goal of the Council is to create the policy agenda for the Forum Fronterizo public programs.**

*To learn more, visit [www.sandiegodialogue.org](http://www.sandiegodialogue.org)*

The third and final challenge facing the San Diego region, according to Scott Grimes, is the ongoing need to upgrade and strengthen the human capital of residents. Business leaders are concerned about the growing mismatch between the skills needed for jobs in the technology industry and the quality of education at educational institutions. As a result, business and civic leaders have been focused on improving the quality of the K-12 public education system. This is particularly important for the San Diego region because of the significant immigrant and minority populations in the city’s public schools. “Low-income children and immigrants are having a difficult time in the public school system which is preventing them from obtaining the high-skill, high-wage jobs,” said Grimes.

The San Diego Dialogue has focused its policy agenda around cross-border development, smart growth and environmental preservation and K-12 education. However, the Dialogue’s biggest priority at the moment is on its organizational structure and future direction because the Co-Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Charles Nathanson, passed away last year. This was a major blow to San Diego Dialogue since Dr. Nathanson was instrumental in guiding the organization forward. The University of California, San Diego is now playing the primary role in setting the direction of the organization. Moreover, UCSD still has not hired an Executive Director to lead the organization.

#### Structure and Operations

The membership of San Diego Dialogue is a governing body of prominent civic and business leaders. The organization has approximately 120 invited members representing industry, government, the media, academic institutions and nonprofit organizations on both sides of the border. The Dialogue’s members are recruited based on their civic reputation, thoughtful discourse, a collaborative approach to problem-solving and

concern for cross-border issues.

The policy direction of the Dialogue is set by a 20-member Steering Committee. The Steering Committee and a six-member Executive Committee govern the Dialogue. The Executive Committee is composed of the Chair of the Dialogue and six Vice Chairs. Each committee meets on a quarterly basis. The Dialogue's annual operating budget, which allows it to carry out research and public education activities, is funded by a combination of foundation and corporate grants as well as revenues generated from public events and the organization's corporate and individual programs.