

Statement to the Press

Benchmarking / Best Practices Trips

Recently TREO lead 38 community leaders on a best practices trip to the San Diego area. TREO regularly evaluates how the Tucson region can improve its competitive position within the global economy, a common practice nationally. The TREO Leadership Exchange program, attended by 35-40 leaders annually, brings Tucson's prominent business and community leaders together to discuss the innovations and best practices of a region facing relevant business and policy issues while reinforcing the collective vision and collaboration in our own community. TREO instituted these annual Leadership Exchange trips with the Austin, TX delegation in 2006, followed by Portland, OR; Albuquerque, NM; and Huntsville, AL.

TREO's multi-pronged economic development strategy includes job creation and expansion. San Diego has built a strong, diverse and resilient economy based upon many of the same resources that are present in our region. Like Tucson, San Diego has a strong tourism component to its economy. Like Tucson, it also is the home to a major research university. The difference is that it has been able to diversify its economy by using its knowledge resources and skilled workforce to build a strong employment base. Companies are formed and spawn new companies. Workers acquire skills and expertise they can use in other employment areas. They are not dependent upon one or two industry segments but have a more diversified base.

Why San Diego

In order for the Tucson region to successfully compete in a challenging economy, we must benchmark ourselves against similar cities and identify areas for growth. San Diego was selected for its strength in the following:

- Bioscience Success: What Does It Take?
 - Successful Collaboration between Industry and Academia
 - The Birth of Biotech: How one company helped seed San Diego's industry
- Maximizing Potential of a Multi-National Border Region
 - Doing Business with Mexico
 - Border Infrastructure: Shared Challenges and Opportunities

San Diego is a community widely recognized for "growing its own." During the trip we learned from San Diego's success at building a knowledge-based economy that creates jobs geometrically from the start-up and expansion of companies rather than incrementally from recruitment and relocation. TREO believes that Tucson can build a similar economy, one that provides jobs and

transferable skills for a broad cross-section of our residents. Young people graduating from San Diego's community colleges and universities can find jobs in San Diego. We want the same thing for Tucson. TREO recently participated in the release of the Entrepreneurial Economic Blueprint that outlines the strategies needed to build an economy built on innovation and entrepreneurship. This trip assisted the region's private and public leadership in learning how to implement those strategies.

The trip's theme "Growing Your Own - Cultivating Assets and Translating Those Into Economic Opportunities: The San Diego Story" was the perfect umbrella theme for our bioscience and border sessions. The trip was an indication that all successful communities including San Diego have these goals and characteristics. A final report of the findings is being prepared for distribution and will provide more details on findings.

Cost

TREO's Leadership Exchange Trips are conducted by invitation only. Participants pay \$2,000 all inclusive. Eight public officials were granted scholarships for the trip. Scholarships are privately funded. The majority of the participants were private business leaders.