

The Policy & Innovation Center helps government and community leaders act on smart ideas.

WELCOME

Dear Friends,

This past year proved something we've always believed: when San Diego comes together around bold ideas, real change follows. The Policy & Innovation Center was created to do just that — **to bring research, resources, and people together to tackle the challenges no one can solve alone.**

The results speak for themselves. In just a few short years, the Policy & Innovation Center helped unlock more than **\$122 million** in funding and resources for the region. We are designing and administering a transformational \$75 million behavioral health program on behalf of the County of San Diego that will train 3,000 urgently needed health care providers for the region. We helped lay the foundation for **UniverCity**, expanding four-year college degrees to South Bay, San Diego. And we continue to convene leaders across sectors to shape smarter, more inclusive policy for the future.

Behind every milestone is the same belief: San Diego can be a model for what's possible when innovation is grounded in community, equity, and partnership. We are not just responding to the issues of today, we are building solutions that will stand the test of time.

This annual report is a snapshot of progress made possible by collaboration. The challenges ahead are real — climate change, affordability, economic inequality — but so is our resolve. Our new strategic plan commits our organization to pursuing solutions to these challenges in partnership with others. Together, we will keep turning ideas into action and action into impact.

Thank you for standing with us on this journey. We invite you to read these highlights with pride, knowing these achievements represent what's possible when we work together for the greater good.

With gratitude and determination,



Susan L. Guinn
Susan L. Guinn, Esq.
President & CEO



Ben Haddad
Ben Haddad
Chair, Board of Directors

Strategic Plan

VISION

We envision a future where communities address their toughest challenges to enable everyone in their regions to thrive.

Strategic Priorities

These strategic priorities form the four pillars of our strategic plan and drive the strategies we will employ to achieve our vision.

1 STRENGTHENING REGIONAL RESILIENCY

Forging networks and partnerships, building community capacity, fostering resilience, and strategically channeling public resources.

2 CHAMPIONING ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Delivering economic research and analysis, making economic policy recommendations, fostering community prosperity, and motivating action.

3 ENHANCING COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLBEING

Providing research and data on community and behavioral health issues, facilitating cross-sector coalitions, piloting scalable solutions, and identifying policy recommendations.

4 PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Supporting climate and water quality research, partnering to advance regional environmental goals, identifying practical policy solutions, and inspiring collective action.

VALUES

WE ARE
COMMITTED
TO EVIDENCE

- We base our conclusions on rigorous research.
- We create data-informed, independent public policy insights.

WE
CHAMPION
INNOVATION

- We galvanize new ideas and new practices.
- We leverage diverse perspectives and disciplines.

WE ARE
STRONGER
TOGETHER

- We build coalitions to achieve shared goals.
- We support our partners' success.

WE ARE
DRIVEN BY
IMPACT

- We strive to create measurable change.
- We focus on the communities we serve.

Trusted Source of Information

ECONOMY & JOBS

We produce analyses and plans that aim to strengthen the labor market and our regional economy, create data-driven reports to support and advance quality jobs, and identify emerging trends that can help employers and local governments maximize opportunities for inclusive growth.

HOUSING

We analyze market trends and innovations including affordability, financing solutions, and building systems, and provide technical assistance to governments, including through a project for the City of San Diego that ultimately aims to increase the number of new homes in the city by 60%.

EDUCATION

We develop strategies to expand educational opportunity. Our research helped bring bachelor's degree programs to Chula Vista, the largest city in California without a four-year institutions, where the first bachelor's students matriculated this year.

WORKFORCE

We help policymakers invest in strategies that maximize regional workforce opportunity. Our research identified high-priority communities to guide San Diego Workforce Partnership's career-center expansion and workforce development efforts.

WATER

We research the challenges facing San Diego's water utilities, and the tension underlying the need for affordable, reliable, and safe drinking water systems. Our work helps policymakers understand the tradeoffs of different policies across affordability, reliability, and stability, so they can make informed decisions.

TRANSPORTATION

We reveal the potential impacts of new infrastructure investment, providing economic insights to inform viable options for freight and passenger train service between San Diego and Tijuana for the Caltrans Binational Rail Plan.

"Our partnership with the Policy & Innovation Center has been a meaningful step toward advancing equitable solutions in water affordability, innovative technology, and community focused green stormwater infrastructure for our region. We value this collaboration and look forward to continuing our shared work to create lasting, positive change in the communities we serve."

LARA BARRETT

*Land Use/Environmental Planner III,
County of San Diego*



"The Policy & Innovation Center continues to be an invaluable partner to San Diego, and this annual report reflects the depth of their commitment to our community. Their work aligns closely with our shared mission to expand opportunity and build a stronger, more inclusive economy. The Policy & Innovation Center is not only a trusted resource but also an inspiration for how organizations can drive meaningful impact across our region."

RACHEL BEREZA

*President and Chief Executive Officer,
San Diego Workforce Partnership*



Trusted Partner



According to the Policy & Innovation Center's most recent partner survey, over 95% of our partners place their trust in us, recognizing the relevance of our shared work. They express a strong desire to continue collaborating with us and affirm that our efforts add meaningful value to the region. Even more inspiring, **every single partner that responded to the survey—100%—reports satisfaction with our research products and convening services**, underscoring the strength of our relationships and the quality of what we do. These results reflect not only our commitment to excellence, but also the power of partnership in driving regional progress and innovation.

The organizations shown reflect the Policy & Innovation Center's partners in FY25.



"The Policy & Innovation Center brings experts together to find solutions that help San Diego be a leader, particularly when it comes to achieving measurable success in housing and climate policy."

HEIDI VONBLUM
Planning Director, City of San Diego



Brookings Institution Partnership

The Policy & Innovation Center is the only regional organization in the country that possesses a long-term research partnership with the Brookings Institution, the nation's oldest and most respected public policy think tank. In this fourth year of our partnership, Brookings and the Policy & Innovation Center worked together to bring national insights to bear on key challenges for the San Diego region, and to translate lessons from San Diego's local experience into actionable federal policy proposals.

- BROOKINGS AND THE POLICY & INNOVATION CENTER COLLABORATED TO PUBLISH A PROPOSAL FOR A **FEDERAL REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT** THAT COULD DELIVER TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO SAN DIEGO.
- BROOKINGS EXPERTS INFORMED GROUNDBREAKING POLICY & INNOVATION CENTER RESEARCH THAT EXAMINES THE CAUSES OF, AND OFFERS POTENTIAL **SOLUTIONS** TO, **RISING WATER AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES** IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION.

"The Policy & Innovation Center represents exactly the kind of locally rooted, evidence-based approach to regional problem-solving that Brookings champions. By combining cutting-edge research with stakeholder engagement and policy incubation, the Policy & Innovation Center exemplifies how metropolitan areas can bridge the gap between analysis and action."

ROBERT PUENTES

Vice President & Director, Brookings Metro





COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO COMMITS
\$75M TO TRANSFORM BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH WORKFORCE

Historic investment will add
3,000 new professionals to
confront the region's behavioral
health crisis through zero-
interest forgivable loans and
paid internships.

At podium: **Ben Haddad**, Policy & Innovation Center Board Chair and Principal at California Strategies
L-R: **Andy Hall**, CEO of Trailhead Strategies
Kia Kavoosi, Director of Impact Investments at Social Finance
Stephanie Gioia-Beckman, Senior Director of Workforce and Community Impact, Policy & Innovation Center
Terra Lawson-Remer, San Diego County Supervisor and Board Chair
Nadia Privara Brahms, Director of Behavioral Health Services at County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency
David Valencia, a recent graduate from SDSU's marriage and family therapist program

Systems Change

This first-of-its-kind \$75 million Behavioral Health Program, called ELEVATE, will strengthen the San Diego region's behavioral health ecosystem by delivering 3,000 new, highly trained workers where they're needed most. Thanks to funding from the County of San Diego and State of California, we are transforming the ecosystem of education, employer support, and apprenticeship hubs to build a future where everyone can access mental health services.

- **ZERO-INTEREST LOANS AND STIPENDS** SO STUDENTS CAN PURSUE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CAREERS WITHOUT THE CRUSHING WEIGHT OF DEBT.
- RETENTION INCENTIVES THAT REWARD CURRENT EMPLOYEES FOR **ADVANCING THEIR EDUCATION** WHILE KEEPING THEIR TALENTS IN OUR PUBLIC SYSTEM.
- AN **APPRENTICESHIP NETWORK**—PAID, EARN-AND-LEARN PATHWAYS WITH STANDARDIZED CURRICULA, SHARED RECRUITMENT, AND PORTABLE CREDENTIALS TO SPEED UP HIRING AND DRIVE COMPLETION.
- EXPANSION OF **PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS**, PRIORITIZING THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE AND MULTILINGUAL SKILLS, BECAUSE COMMUNITIES DESERVE CARE THAT REFLECTS THEIR REALITIES.
- **MORE NURSE PRACTITIONERS** TRAINED AND PLACED IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SETTINGS; WITH THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO SUCCEED LONG-TERM.
- PAID INTERNSHIPS AND STRONGER SUPERVISION CAPACITY, SO TRAINEES DON'T JUST LEARN—**THEY LAND REAL JOBS.**



"Our firm has been working with the Policy & Innovation Center since 2024 to design and implement a \$75M ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund to address the critical shortage of essential behavioral health professionals in San Diego. It's a bold effort with high stakes for the industry as the County and its service providers work to expand access to critical substance use and mental health services for San Diego residents."

ANDY HALL

President & Chief Executive Officer, Trailhead Strategies



"The Policy & Innovation Center has been a wonderful partner in developing and implementing the new ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund to support training, recruitment, and retention of workers within the public specialty behavioral health system locally. We are thrilled to see this critical opportunity come to fruition and look forward seeing how it enhances opportunities for the local workforce."

NADIA PRIVARA BRAHMS

Behavioral Health Services Director, San Diego County

Powering Collective Solutions

Facilitated by the Policy & Innovation Center and the Brookings Institution, the Government & Agency Council is comprised of representatives from the County of San Diego, 18 municipalities, and core local agencies. Its purpose is to promote cross-jurisdiction collaboration, secure and leverage federal and state funding, find solutions, share expertise, and determine research gaps to support action. This year, focus areas included workforce development, the post-election outlook for the San Diego region, and water affordability.

The Policy & Innovation Center's Federal Impacts Roundtables have brought together leaders from industry, government, philanthropy, higher education, and the nonprofit sector to examine the local implications of changing priorities in Washington, D.C.: gain perspective from peer regions adapting to similar transitions; and identify emerging priorities and approaches for continued information-sharing and problem-solving across sectors. The Policy & Innovation Center will continue to convene these leaders in 2026, with an eye toward designing and informing bottom-up initiatives that can deliver broad-based prosperity in a new federalist era.

Members of the Government & Agency Council include:

County of San Diego	City of La Mesa
City of San Diego	City of Lemon Grove
City of Carlsbad	City of National City
City of Chula Vista	City of Oceanside
City of Coronado	City of Poway
City of Del Mar	City of San Marcos
City of El Cajon	City of Santee
City of Encinitas	City of Solana Beach
City of Escondido	City of Vista
City of Imperial Beach	San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)
Port of San Diego	Metropolitan Transit System (MTS)
San Diego Airport Authority	

Monica Montgomery Steppe
San Diego County Supervisor



Staff Expertise

Research Team

Daniel Enemark *VP, Chief Economist*

PhD - Political Economy

Expertise: Macroeconomics, workforce development, racial equity, behavioral health, labor economics, policy analysis, research design and econometrics

Jamal Russell Black *Senior Officer, Analytics & Impact*

PhD (in progress) - Climate Economics

Expertise: Energy and water affordability, equitable decarbonization, geospatial analysis, interactive data mapping and visualization

Karen Boyd *Economist, Director of Research*

PhD - AI ethics; MBA

Expertise: AI ethics, research methods, workforce development, value sensitive design, technology in organizations, qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis

Fernanda Herrera *Economist*

PhD - Economics

Expertise: Cost-benefit analysis, impact assessment, forecasting, supply-demand equilibrium, probability-based economic modeling

Policy & Programs Team

Emily Wier *VP, Chief Policy & Strategy Officer*

Master of Environmental Management

Expertise: Public policy development and analysis, including climate, water, housing, land use, economic development; strategy and partnerships state and local government affairs

Josh Jacobsen

Senior Officer, Government Relations and External Affairs

BSB - Business Marketing

Expertise: Government affairs, communications, website and event management

Alicia L. Jurek *Senior Officer, Economics*

PhD - Criminal Justice & Criminology

Expertise: Research methods, quantitative analysis, inclusive economic development, education, criminal justice, representative bureaucracy, organizational theory

Gabriela Gonzalez Martinez *Economic Analyst*

MIA (in progress) - Master of International Affairs

Expertise: Data analysis, workforce development, equity-centered research, spatial analysis, survey design, data visualization, community-engagement for research

Niloufar Nasrollahzadeh *Economic Analyst*

MPP - Master of Public Policy

Expertise: Data analysis, data visualization, quantitative/qualitative research methods, policy analysis, water policy, health policy, economics

Gabriela Stone *Economic Analyst*

MGH - Master of Global Health

Expertise: Equity-centered research, global & public health, mixed-methods research, public policy analysis, and social epidemiology/biostatistics

Behavioral Health Team

Stephanie Gioia-Beckman

Senior Director, Workforce & Community Impact

B.S. - Psychology

Expertise: Policy development, government and community relations, workforce strategy, leading cross-sector collaborations, advancing systems-level reforms and designing programs that strengthen access, equity, and outcomes across behavioral health and public health

Kristin Garrett Montgomery

Sr. Officer, Behavioral Health Strategy & Operations

MPH - Health Services Administration

Expertise: Community health, healthcare, children's behavioral health. Program development and management, policy development, collective impact, non-profit leadership and operations

Genie Wungsukit

Admin. Asst., Behavioral Health Workforce & Retention

B.S. - Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience

Expertise: Leveraging technological tools to create efficient workflows, program and event coordination, cross-cultural communication and collaboration that drives mission-aligned impact

Finance Team & Operations Team

Christine Dolan *VP, Chief Financial Officer*

MBA & M.S. - Management and Leadership

Expertise: Nonprofit financial management, strategic and organizational planning, fiscal policy and compliance, systems implementation, process improvement, and data-informed decision-making

Arnold Cerdonio *Accountant*

CPA (1987 - Philippine CPA Board)

Expertise: For profit (manufacturing and insurance) and non-profit financial management, full cycle-accounting to financial statement preparation, contract administration, reconciliation of accounts (A/R, A/P, inter-company, bank), payroll, construction and project accounting, budgets and forecasting, office management

Tiffany Frost *Operations Administrator & Compliance Specialist*

AA - Psychology

Expertise: Operations, compliance, project administration, standard operating procedures

Gloria Rivera *Accounting Associate*

AA (in progress) - Liberal Arts

Expertise: Office management and organization, payment processing and expense management, confidentiality and discretion, communication and interpersonal skills, invoice processing and reconciliation

Executive

Susan L. Guinn *President & Chief Executive Officer*

BSN & ESQ.

Expertise: Bringing legal and policy rigor to complex challenges, leveraging philanthropic and private sector resources, innovation, entrepreneurship, public/private partnerships and contract compliance

Alan Berube *Senior Vice President*

MPP - Master of Public Policy

Expertise: City and regional economies, inclusive economic development, demographics, income dynamics, federal/state regional development policies, nonprofit leadership

Vicki Vasquez *Executive Assistant & Board Liaison*

MA. Ed. - Master of Arts, Education

Expertise: Administrative mastery, communication, project and task management, strategic support, relationship building, technology proficiency, problem solving and adaptability

Organizational Excellence

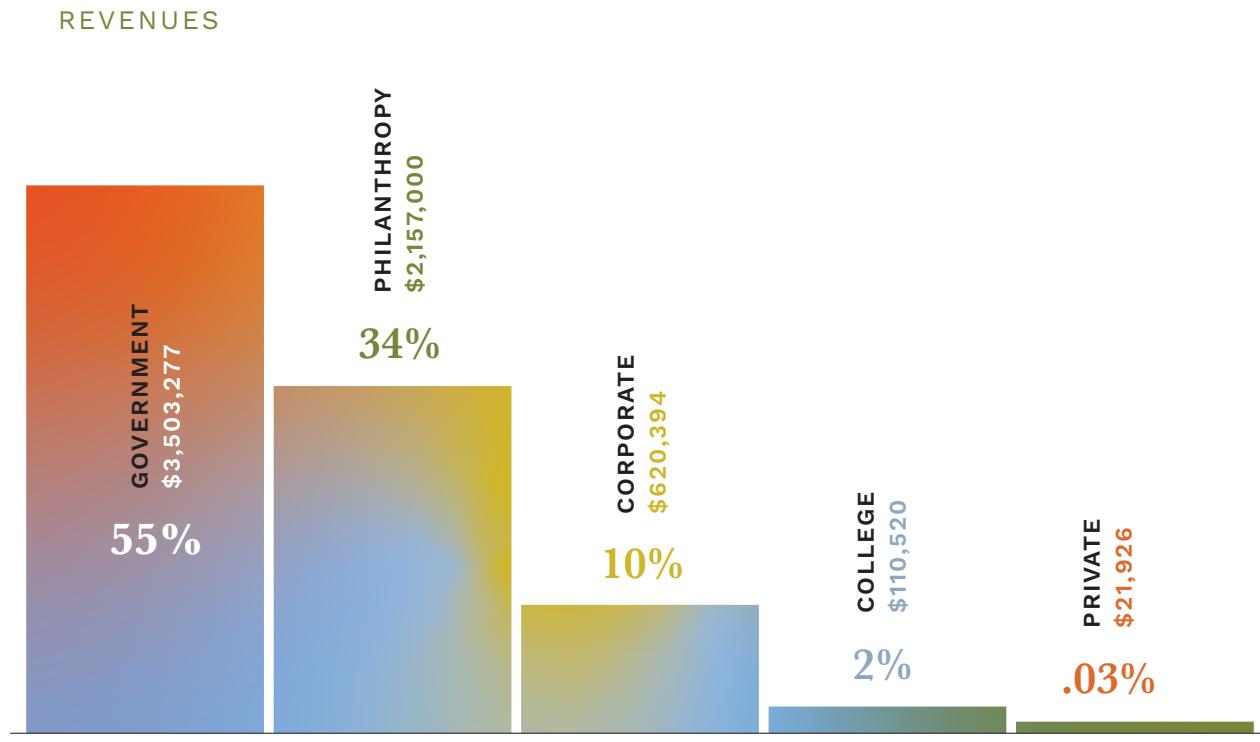
- TRUSTED TO STEWARD COMPLEX, **MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS** WITH ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRECISION.
- STRONG **GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS** ENSURE PARTNERS AND FUNDERS CAN RELY ON THE POLICY & INNOVATION CENTER TO DELIVER WITH INTEGRITY.
- CLEAN **THIRD PARTY AUDITS** EVERY YEAR OF EXISTENCE.

Awards



Fiscal Year 2025 Financials

July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, Unaudited



EXPENSES

TOTAL EXPENSES, NET ASSETS
\$5,939,177

BALANCE SHEET ITEMS

Item	Amount
CASH	\$9,642,888
DEFERRED REVENUE	\$3,523,644

Policy & Innovation Center Board of Directors

Ben Haddad

BOARD CHAIR

Principal, *California Strategies*

Jim Howell

BOARD TREASURER, FINANCE & ADMIN COMMITTEE CHAIR

Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, *San Diego Foundation*

P. Kay Coleman

IMMEDIATE PAST BOARD CHAIR & CURRENT VICE CHAIR

President & CEO, *Del Mar Venture Group*

Lisa Cuestas

CHAIR, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Chief Executive Officer, *Casa Familiar*

Mel Katz

BOARD SECRETARY, GOVERNANCE & NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Co-founder & Executive Officer, *Manpower Staffing Services of San Diego*

Ernest Rady

BOARD MEMBER

Chairman & CEO, *American Assets Trust*

Susan A. Davis

BOARD MEMBER

Former U.S. Congressperson

Michel Anderson

VICE CHAIR, FINANCE & ADMIN COMMITTEE AND AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Principal, *Michel Anderson & Associates*

Mark A. Stuart

BOARD MEMBER

President & CEO, *San Diego Foundation*

Susan L. Guinn, Esq.

President & CEO, *Policy & Innovation Center*



“The San Diego Foundation deeply values the Policy & Innovation Center’s commitment to research and data-driven insights. Their work not only informs smarter decisions but also strengthens our shared ability to create meaningful, long-term change for communities throughout San Diego.”

MARK A. STUART

President & Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Foundation





**POLICY &
INNOVATION
CENTER**

THINKPIC.ORG

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