

February 23, 2024

Jeff Ball

OCBC had its annual dinner last Thursday night at the Disneyland Hotel, with over 700 people in attendance. Thank you to all of you who were able to participate.

Linda DiMario

We had our Octane Partner Summit this week, and we recognized the connectivity for all the work that we're doing to increase high-paying jobs, build businesses, and have an impact in the community. Thank you, Jeff, for being present. Additionally, we are launching OC Innovation Week with our primary partners OCBC, Octane OC, and UCI Bill Applied Innovation, which will be from April 29th to May 3rd.

Jeff Ball

Innovation Week is something new, we have three organizations that have partnered. The intention is to showcase the innovation happening in Orange County and the great resources that we have to help ideas turn into action to provide further employment and growth opportunities in our local economy.

Jesse Ben Ron

Updates from the convening in Sacramento, the state is looking to retire CERF and phrases like high road transition collaborative, and high road jobs. Now it's CA Jobs First. This was not a decision by the regions, but rather a decision from the state. Branding-wise, they will reach out to the regions for feedback.

Kathy Boyd

The state wants to be more inclusive and is leaving us with autonomy, we worked together on some design work for the rebranding.

Ish Herrera

There are regions in the state where they're calling themselves, Redwood Rise, and in Sacramento they're calling themselves Together We Prosper, just to give some brand examples.

Garry Brown

The state is committed to the success of this project. All 13 regions are structured differently. Orange County has one convener and that's OCBC, with 71 members on the collaborative. Kern County has 17 members and five conveners who have to vote and agree on how to move forward.

Toni Symonds

The state is happy with our progress, they think Orange County is on the right track.

Christy Tran

These regional plans are going to be important. As we move forward, in this process, I want you all to think about what is Orange County's story.

Ish Herrera

During my one-on-one check-in with the state, I shared that all members of this collaborative have been committed, disciplined and on schedule with the timeline.

Jesse Ben Ron

The state acknowledges that the bulk of funding will originate from federal sources, with a focus on the regional Investment Initiative, estimated at \$250 to \$275 million. The federal government is expected to contribute primarily to the \$180 billion investment. Please consult the attached PDF for further details. Our state's priorities lie in enhancing economic competitiveness and resilience, leveraging Orange County's diverse economy. We aim to broaden our scope to include additional industries and allocate at least 40% of funds to support disadvantaged communities. Projects must align with the Racial Equity Executive Order, encompassing equity impact assessment, displacement analysis, and community engagement. Furthermore, there's an executive order emphasizing the protection and restoration of biodiversity, in line with our goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. We encourage stakeholders to provide feedback on these draft criteria, as they will undergo public comment and potential modifications.

Toni Symonds

I think this might be a good opportunity to do a workgroup Task Force, whatever people feel comfortable with the term so that those that want to can go through it line by line.

Linda DiMario

It appears to me that the information that you're sharing today is equivalent to checkboxes. These things must be integrated or incorporated in some way. Would that be accurate?

Jesse Ben Ron

Yes, it's mandatory.

Kate Klimow

We have already voted on these kinds of projects. What about the work we have already done?

Jesse Ben Ron

We are ahead of other regions, I will be an intermediary with the state. We will have more time to digest all of this information.

Luis Sarmiento

CERF was a difficult name to work with within the community, I don't love Jobs First. I do like some of the names of other regions. Whatever we do next is going to be important. A few of us had proposed an additional community forum. I like Toni's suggestion about creating a workgroup.

Jesse Ben Ron

I am thinking about a timeline given some of this information. The state will most likely allow us to complete this work by August 31 instead of at the end of June. One thing that came up in real-time and had the highest levels of the state present, was the idea of not having the regions submit the two to

three priority projects as part of the Regional Plan Part Two. If this is the case, this lessens our workload. I need to go to the state and get a final order. If the state is going to release this Solicitation for Proposal (SFP) in September which is when the funding will be, are we going to wait for the final SFP and then go through the project solicitation process, which will then be delayed and then submit? Or do we have enough to have pretty strong projects, and then be able to submit the first thing in September? They will also want us to have a portfolio of projects. I would like the group to think if we want to have projects ready for as soon as funding is available to submit and if we do, do we want to add more criteria? Then we have to start understanding what those are.

Ish Herrera

So we all understand acronyms, SFP is solicitation for proposals. That's the mechanism that many government agencies use to invite folks to submit their proposals to be considered for funding.

Jesse Ben Ron

In our shared folder you will see the list of items we still need to do. Such as reviewing and finalizing the strategy framework continue to view guidelines from the state. The state won't just want to see a list of 21 strategies, they will want to know the historical context, and what assets Orange County has to meet these.

Jesse Ben Ron

Going over the strategy results document, some people mistakenly voted more than three in certain categories. I am looking for them to correct it so there could be some changes. In cells 2-4, that's where you could potentially see a change in some of these categories. Four more people are left outstanding. We need to balance broadly what are needs are vs making sure that we are not leaving ourselves out of the funding for the regional investment. If you click through every tab, it will give you a sense of who the top vote-getters are. I color-coded them in these buckets, the lettering, and red mean it was a top vote-getter. The ones in red are the ones that we will most likely work off of.

Jesse Ben Ron

The top three voted for this category: Number one, invest in the success of the local workforce, providing training opportunities that empower lower-wage employees to acquire higher-paying jobs and priority industries (especially in environmental and climate-related jobs). Those in parentheses were not in the original strategy that was taken on by the stakeholders. Number two is funding for pre-training or soft skill training programs and/or internships. This is an important infrastructure for workforce development and will teach transferable skills that will benefit all workers, especially with those limited or no work experience. Number three, funding and technical assistance for the small business community and entrepreneurs (that adds in language, focused outreach, or other guidelines) to ensure resources benefit small businesses owned by historically disinvested community members, namely BIPOC-owned small businesses. These are the three vote-getters from the Strategies for the Growth of Target Industries. It doesn't look like the gap between three and four would be overcome even with the votes still outstanding. When we move into Strategies for Increasing Economic Diversification, the first one reads, support efforts by local educational institutions, especially those serving disadvantaged communities, to connect with local employers and build talent pipelines. Number two reads, affordable housing for workers and addressing gentrification and rising prices. As you can see, there's a tie for

third place, develop mid-level technical jobs that do not require a four-year degree in emerging industries. Number five, funding to make childcare and transportation resources more robust and readily available. We want to improve mobility while also reducing emissions. The sixth one is one off, not technically the top three but just to be aware, have education partners create connections between programs/pathways and projects such as ocVibe, which is the 100-acre site that will feature a concert, 35 restaurants, 2 hotels 1,500 housing units, office, and parks. Moving on to Strategies for Responding Effectively to Economic Shocks, number one, is more communication and collaboration between government agencies and nonprofits, so that government agencies know what agencies to include when they need to deploy emergency operations and funding to support the infrastructure of those agencies so that there's a reliable safety net. Number two, provide resources and opportunities for individuals to be trained to meet the needs of the economic shock and convert that training and experience as the foundation for their own business to emerge stronger out of the economic shock (inclusive of removing language, cultural, and other barriers to access). Number three, create a fund and a plan to deploy economic aid to disinvested businesses and individuals for lease/rent payments, medical bills, and other basic needs and expenses. There's also a tie for third here, and number four is technical assistance for small businesses in financial management to ensure they have their financial records to qualify for support/government assistance (that adds in language, focused outreach, or other guidelines to ensure resources benefit small businesses owned, by historically disinvested community members, namely BIPOC-owned small businesses.) Moving to Strategies for Increasing Economic Equity, number one, engage local employers in creating and expanding work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships that lead into these career pathways. Number two, improving community engagement, (participation of low-income residents of color and historically disinvested communities) in the creation of community development strategies and projects to ensure (direct participation) in decisions (to) have the highest benefit for those residents. Number three, education for high school students on employment opportunities including non-college tracks; endeavoring to ensure that all high school students receive the same information on their opportunities. As you can see, there's a tie here as well. Number 4, is to support preexisting nonprofits and initiatives aimed at rescaling and upskilling workers, especially in disinvested communities. Strategies for Increasing Health Equity, number one is greater access, (investment in traditionally marginalized and lower-income communities that address community health and social determinants of health and the environment that they live in. These investments can address health, good jobs, open space, affordable housing, other important community priorities, and improving neighborhoods.) The access to basic needs that are not directly healthcare services, but that will impact an individual's health, such as high-quality food, housing, etc. Next, invest advocate for more affordable health insurance, more outreach and awareness and investment in private health (activities), (and access to culturally accepted health services). Next, ensure that all of the county's communities, counties, have access to mental health care. Strategies for Increasing Environmental Equity, establish Green Innovation Zones, where small businesses are supported in transitioning to cleaner and more sustainable power sources and methods of operation, production, and distribution. Number two, form strong partnerships with community-based organizations to identify and develop new green spaces. Number three, utilize data points and mapping from research, i.e. CalEnviroScreen, to focus on heat islands, and negative environmental impacts in disadvantaged communities. The last category, Aligning with State Strategies, invests/supports CA K-16 Education Collaborative, to build strong partnerships between school districts, community colleges, and local employers to create seamless pathways for students. Number two, a collaborative approach

where the private and public sectors align on goals and programs to support more jobs that are paid a living wage, number three, incorporate the need for more affordable housing, workforce housing, and/or housing stipends and connect to accelerating investments in infrastructure. Number three is one vote off, deploy, and build infrastructure for clean energy uses, which will require training for those who want to be electricians and skilled construction workers.

Luis Sarmiento

What's the intention of pointing out the similar strategies?

Jesse Ben Ron

I didn't want categories to be repetitive, therefore, we offer the opportunity to consolidate if that is what the group prefers. Consolidating could open up another strategy to then elevate to the top three

Luis Sarmiento

Can we go to the Increasing Economic Diversification tab? Row number five is tied for third and is very different than the other ones so maybe in this case it makes sense to include row number five.

Jesse Ben Ron

Exactly that that's the opportunity this provides if the collaborative wants to move in that direction.

Luis Sarmiento

I would support that, it would open up space.

Toni Symonds

I see this as an initial mind mapping and why I appreciate Jesse's extra strategy category. This is freeing in the sense of trying to put some data out there, some things to organize our thoughts around.

Niree Kodaverdian

As an economist, I know that a lot of government policies have what are called unintended consequences. I would like more research done on why we have chosen the strategies that we did and would like more clarity on the actionable steps.

Jesse Ben Ron

Unfortunately, I don't think we can implement your recommendation, how we wanted to proceed was discussed before you joined the collaborative. The collaborative needs to get to a set of strategies to deliver to the state based on the categories you see in these tabs. There's a document called the Conference of Economic Development Strategy where strategies are developed, it's not just a bullet point statement, but there is content behind those and that's something that we'll also have to develop, but we can't develop that without getting the high-level framework that is going to be decided by you as a collaborative member. We had to allow it to be a public process, and no, one way was going to overrule the other and that's why there's such variety and even the length of these.

Niree Kodaverdian

In writing the proposal could we modify the language of the strategy? Or are we stuck to these strategies?

Jesse Ben Ron

We cannot create a whole new strategy, because that would undermine the previous process, but this doesn't have to be delivered until the end of August. We have time to see what analysis around these strategies would look like and whether people think it is worth acting upon and delivering to the state.

Linda DiMario

There's enormous research that was undertaken such as community outreach. Also, I agree with Tony, these are going to be interpreted in ways that are going to give us the most effective pathways to achieve the outcomes that we intend.

Iosefa Alofaituli

I would just say that Niree is not wrong and Linda is not wrong, either. These are strategies that have come from exhaustive research, engagement and wisdom of our community. To Niree's point, we could see these as not strategies, but strategic directions. We are progressing well, and still have space to continue to be more informed by evidence and research.

Jesse Ben Ron

What we can do, especially now that some have been elevated more than others is look to the report, and pull the sections that addressed this to see if there's alignment. I can review the Outreach and Engagement community documents and show where there is compatibility in those surveys.

Luis Sarmiento

We talked about the importance of going back to the community for this to be vetted by them. We'd like to host another forum to vet these ideas, and Niree, you may join us as well.

Ish Herrera

There was a fascinating exercise in Sacramento to activate the complimentary hemisphere of the brain. If there was a front-page story in your local newspaper describing the success of this initiative, 10-20 years from now, what would that headline be? One in the chat says, Orange County breaking down siloes and succeeding with cross-sector collaboration.

Jesse Ben Ron

The headline can help us with some sort of direction, your personal NorthStar, the end of this all the effort and work you've put in.

Ish Herrera

Continue thinking about what that Northstar is for your sector, your stakeholder groups, and how that is reflected in the work that we're doing to iterate not just the result of the survey findings, but the upcoming months of work in refining those results.