

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

What makes a Transborder Leader? Stakeholders from the San Diego-Tijuana region fit a profile of leadership-in-action made for our times of radical uncertainty. They operate in a complex binational ecosystem – a leadership laboratory – and a magnet for risk takers and visionaries. Ambiguity and turbulence come with the territory. To build a viable and prosperous binational region requires connection and collaboration over an international border, where multiple jurisdictions, agendas and priorities are in play. Transborder stakeholders engage across enterprises and sectors to build commerce, community and regional cohesion. They identify key competency “super powers” – attitudes, skills, behaviors – to thrive in this region *and* in a post-COVID-19 world.

THE CONTEXT

Home to 6 million people with \$255 billion in regional domestic product built over decades, the San Diego-Tijuana metroplex is where global meets local. Booming in late 2019, an economic collapse in early 2020 – triggered by the COVID-19 global pandemic – presents a threat to the region and to the world. Transfronterizo stakeholders continue to demonstrate the grit, resourcefulness and agility needed to reclaim, rebuild and reimagine the future.

WHO THEY ARE

In 2019 we surveyed a cross-section of 43 binational stakeholders for this exploratory study; all in leadership roles across enterprises and organizations from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Here’s what they said:

WHAT IT TAKES - KEY COMPETENCIES

Transborder stakeholders zeroed-in on five core themes that drive effective leadership in this binational region, in order of importance:



WHY IT MATTERS - THE CHOICE

Leadership matters, as the crisis of COVID-19 illustrates. Transborder leaders – at their best – choose to adopt a “bridges not-walls” mindset over a Darwinian “survival-of-the-fittest” approach. They aspire to a “stronger together” philosophy that transcends borders and supports the common good, regionally. This approach is both practical and mindful of the collective power unleashed by shared values and interests. The choice between a “go-it-alone” versus a “we’re-all-in-this-together” mindset is being tested globally, and locally, as never before.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

Transfronterizo stakeholders operate from a model of purposeful leadership, able to build commerce *and* create community against formidable odds. They commit to mutuality by sharing information, resources and good will. Their challenge is to balance enterprise priorities with regional realities; to negotiate multiple and competing demands with fellow stakeholders. Motivated by “enlightened self-interest,” their binational initiatives are powered by a collaborative mindset that rewards win-win outcomes. In a world turned upside down, transborder leaders remind us of the benefits that come from openness, optimism, adaptability and mutual respect. Their experience and resilience show us what is possible when building a path to the future – together.