



San Diego Scene

New Report Promotes The Economic Benefits Of Better San Diego/Baja Biotech And Defense

The answer: A decided “yes,” especially in the areas of biotech devices, biotech and marine biotechnology, aerospace and defense.

The question: “Are there untapped capabilities and needs on both sides of the border that could stimulate new kinds of partnerships and alliances beneficial to both Baja California’s economic growth and the competitiveness and sustainability of San Diego’s high-tech economy?”

Asking and answering that question is San Diego Dialogue in the new 53-page Borderless Innovation report released as part of its ongoing Crossborder Innovation and Competitiveness Initiative. The document, released in late January before a binational VIP crowd at the San Diego Marriott & Marina, was created in collaboration with CENTRIS, an economic development collaborative in Tijuana and CICESE, a science and technology research center in Ensenada.

The study of the economic possibilities in a region with nearly 6 million people began in 2004. Numerous technology-focused roundtables were held on both sides of the border.

While the report is optimistic, it also recognizes the chief challenge: building trust and cooperation among the public and private sectors, creating a secure border region and fostering a qualified workforce.

The study also shows that Baja’s strong manufacturing base is a good fit with many San Diego industries, especially biotech. For example, in 2003, San Diego reported 6,800 jobs

related to the biomedical device industry while Baja reported 23,700. More than two-thirds of Baja's 60 biomedical device companies already have U.S. parent companies and 13 of those have a headquarters or other significant presence in San Diego County.

The report concludes with 10 recommendations, most calling for better promotion and awareness of the economic ties and promise. The first step will likely be the creation of a Crossborder Innovation and Competitiveness Center to oversee the effort. The report was co-authored by Dialogue's Kenn Morris, Nathan Owens and Mary Walshok. Wells Fargo, the city of Chula Vista and UCSD Extension, under which Dialogue operates, provided financial support.

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