



# LOS ANGELES REGIONAL EXPORT PLAN

METRO EXPORT INITIATIVE






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BROOKINGS-ROCKEFELLER PROJECT  
ON STATE AND METROPOLITAN INNOVATION



## LOS ANGELES REGIONAL EXPORT PLAN

The Los Angeles region has historically been one of the most vibrant and economically healthy regions in the world. Its Pacific Coast location, highly desirable quality of life, dynamic immigrant communities, and diversified economy have made the region an industrial and innovation powerhouse and a magnet for attracting the world's brightest and most creative talents.

Like most U.S. metropolitan areas, the Los Angeles region has taken a significant hit as a result of the Great Recession. The dramatic U.S. economic growth of the 1990s and early 2000s, driven largely by a debt and consumption-oriented economy, eventually cracked and led to the worst global economic downturn since the Great Depression. In the Los Angeles region, this has contributed to a particularly challenging economic situation with real estate deflation, state budget woes, relatively high levels of unemployment, and increased competition both from other U.S. regions and abroad.

However, the Los Angeles region has experienced jolts to its economy in the past and has proven its ability to adapt to new market realities, reinvent itself, and emerge even stronger than before. The end of the Cold War in the 1980s led to a major downturn due to a drop in defense spending. The savings and loan crisis of the early 1990s resulted in crashing area home prices. The dot-com bust of the early 2000s was felt throughout California. In each case, the region rebounded and reasserted itself as a leading economic power.

There is strong sentiment that this post-recession era could be a critical moment for the Los Angeles region, providing a unique opportunity to re-orient its economy and reassert itself as a vibrant globally significant market. Regional leaders recognize that new ideas and strategies for economic growth must be pursued and that a reorientation of the regional economy toward sustainable manufactured and high-value services exports will be central to attaining desired development and growth.

In a mature yet vibrant Los Angeles regional economy, new growth will come via economic diversification, new industry innovation, increasing institutional cooperation, leadership, talent development, and a clearer focus on the impacts and opportunities of globalization. Recognizing that the competitive advantages that have historically driven the Los Angeles region's economy still exist, the political and economic choices point to new ways of leveraging those resources.



### THE OPPORTUNITY: EXPORTS

One of the most obvious new ways identified to drive the Next Economy is through exports. The Los Angeles metropolitan area ranks first nationally in total metro exports and is also the nation's number one port center, based on trade volume.<sup>1</sup> With over 95 percent of the world's consumers projected to be outside of the United States in the coming decade, along with 80 percent of global economic growth, the Los Angeles region is uniquely poised to capitalize on this opportunity based on existing trade and infrastructure. The Los Angeles region has the business base, track record, infrastructure, experience, leadership, and global connectivity to reignite its export focus and generate new jobs.



### THE NEXT ECONOMY AND EXPORTS

As part of its research and public program mission, the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program (Brookings) has identified exports as a key driver in what is being identified as the Next Economy. Brookings' vision of the Next Economy is one that is driven by exports, powered by low-carbon energy, fueled by innovation, and rich with opportunity. This is a vision where the U.S. exports more and wastes less, innovates in what matters, produces and deploys more of what it invents, and ensures the economy works for working families.

Based on this vision, Brookings sought to partner with a select group of U.S. metros in a Metro Export Initiative (MEI) that both complements and implements the federal National Export Initiative (NEI) and its goal of doubling U.S. exports within five years. The Los Angeles region was the first of four pilot metro areas to partner in this MEI in 2011/12. This effort involved establishment of a working group of local export support institutions (e.g., chambers of commerce, ports, universities, governments, associations, businesses) to develop a localized, ground-up, data driven export plan.

### FOOTNOTES

1. As of mid-January 2012, the Port of Los Angeles reported a record growth in exports. "Port of LA Exports Grew 9.2 Percent in December" *The Journal of Commerce Online*, January 17, 2012.

## MARKET ASSESSMENT

A comprehensive market assessment was conducted at the start of the project to ensure the export plan was developed based on solid information and that all committee members were uniformly brought up to speed. It included data benchmarking and one-on-one interviews with companies and local export services providers. It revealed that, although Los Angeles is the top U.S. exporting region, there is significant untapped opportunity to grow exports.



## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MARKET ASSESSMENT

► **The Great Recession was longer and deeper in the Los Angeles region than in the nation as a whole.** The Los Angeles region was on the front lines of the housing bust. Home prices fell by over 40 percent from the end of 2006 through mid-2011.<sup>2</sup> The local housing slump led the region into the recession sooner than the national economy and accelerated its pace of economic contraction. The region shed one half million jobs and output shrank by over 6 percent from the start to end of the local recession.<sup>3</sup>

► **Economic recovery in the Los Angeles region has been tough and slow going following the recession.** Though the local economy has been growing since late 2009, the region has yet to recover its pre-recession level of output.<sup>4</sup> The local labor market is similarly weak. As of December 2011, the region still had 8 percent fewer jobs than it did prior to the recession and, for the twentieth month in a row, the local unemployment rate remained at least two percentage points higher than the national rate.<sup>5</sup>

► **The Los Angeles region's position as a global center of trade offset some effects of the recession.** With \$79.8 billion worth of exports in 2010, the Los Angeles region is the nation's largest metropolitan export market.<sup>6</sup> These exports accounted for 10.9 percent of the region's total economy in 2010, the 33rd highest export intensity among large metropolitan areas. And the region's exports were fairly balanced between goods and services, with goods representing 58.6 percent of export volume and services 41.4 percent. Perhaps most importantly, local exports accounted directly for 312,677 local export production jobs and indirectly supported another 227,999 jobs throughout the nation.

► **The Los Angeles region's export strength is concentrated in a core set of industries.** Ten local industries accounted for 82.8 percent of the region's exports in 2010. The largest of these were royalties, transportation equipment, and computer and electronic equipment. Almost the same set of industries

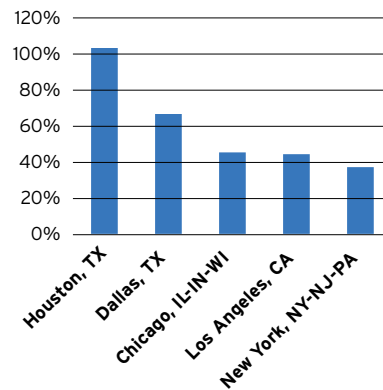
### FOOTNOTES

2. Brookings analysis of Federal Housing Finance Agency data.
3. Brookings analysis of Moody's Analytics data.
4. Ibid.
5. Brookings analysis of Moody's Analytics and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
6. Emilia Istrate and Nick Marchio, 2012, "Export Nation," Brookings.

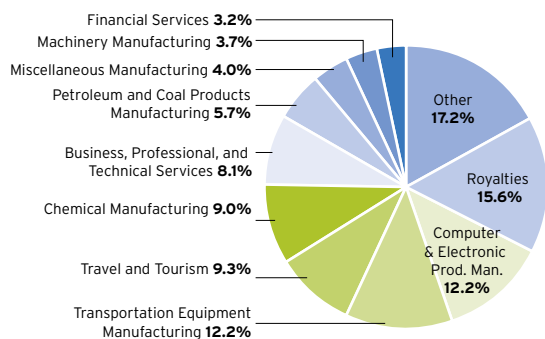
EXPORTS AS A SHARE OF OUTPUT, 2010



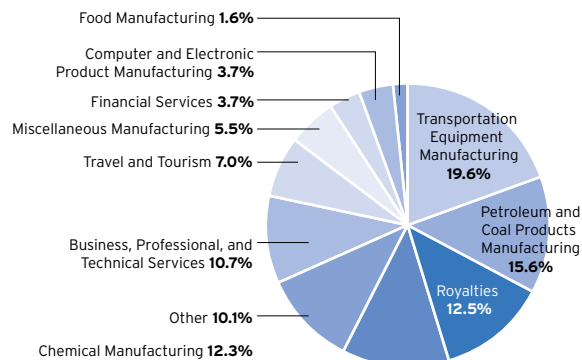
REAL EXPORT GROWTH, 2003 TO 2010



INDUSTRY SHARE OF TOTAL EXPORTS IN 2010



IND. SHARE OF EXPORT GROWTH, 2003 TO 2010





accounted for 90 percent of the region's export growth from 2003 to 2010, together increasing their exports by some \$22.1 billion. Though the Los Angeles region is starting from an already high level of exports, if it is to double that number in five years, it will have to realize continued growth in its top exporting sectors and broaden and diversify its export base beyond these 10 industries.

➤ **The Los Angeles region could be even more globally oriented.** Though the region is already a major global center of trade, Los Angeles has many opportunities to further enhance its position as an exporter of goods and services by more proactively pursuing global opportunities. The Los Angeles region is global in its location, connectivity, and diversity. But those interviewed reported that the region does not fully engage globally. One of the most revealing questions asked as part of company and service provider interviews was whether Los Angeles was a globally-oriented city? The responses were uniformly of two minds. Yes, it is global in terms of the world coming to it (e.g., passive globalization), but not as much in terms of Los Angeles (companies, government, and others) going out into the world.

➤ **Greater global orientation begins with the Los Angeles region's companies.** Company awareness of global opportunities, foreign markets, and available export services and programs is low in the Los Angeles region, as it is throughout the United States. But Los Angeles export services providers are uniform in the belief that promotion alone will not be enough to stimulate export growth. They stress the need for more one-on-one, proactive outreach and case management to gain company commitment to exports and move them successfully through the process.

➤ **Local companies that are new to exporting often need help getting started.** Even companies that are aware of global opportunities often prefer operating within the confines of the U.S. market, where they have been able to successfully grow their businesses in the past. These companies require assistance expanding into foreign markets due to their own internal constraints and perceived trade barriers. In

interviews, companies cited problems with customs and compliance, distributors, intellectual property protection, lack of financing, and language barriers as the biggest barriers to becoming exporters.

➤ **Export service providers in the Los Angeles region/Southern California cooperate regionally but don't operate under a well coordinated system.** Export services and programs in the region are generally considered good; however, they are fragmented and it is not clear who does what. Local firms don't know who to go to and providers, in turn, do not always know where to refer their clients. Though there are many expert resources available to potential exporters, the resources are not in one place. Furthermore, local service providers need more resources to give exporters what they really need.

➤ **Companies in the Los Angeles region that are new to exporting need more customized support.** Local export service providers reported that most often, tailored resources are more helpful than export promotion. Providers need resources to build and manage relationships with firms. Firms need access to experienced export professionals and customized market research. A more sustained federal and state commitment (California currently has no true state trade office) and vision for exports would help the region provide more proactive outreach to create a steady pipeline of export ready companies.

➤ **Companies themselves must be more proactive and intentional about exporting.** Local companies that do export reported that they typically began exporting when a client or distributor found and chose them as a supplier. But for firms to make exports a core part of their business plan, it usually involves hiring expert staff/consultants, a major time commitment by executives, and investment in resources. While companies fear exporting at the outset, most say the results are worth going through the early learning curve. Many local companies stated that if not for exports, they would have had to lay off many workers during the current economic downturn.





## THREE EXPORT GROWTH OBJECTIVES

This export plan is based on pursuit of three core objectives:

- 1 To secure and increase quality jobs in the Los Angeles region, driven by export growth
- 2 To support the national goal of doubling U.S. exports over the next five years
- 3 To foster a more globally-fluent, export-oriented business culture in the Los Angeles region, particularly among SMEs (small to medium sized enterprises)

The assertion here is that a more intentional and elevated export effort, teamed with the region's enviable position related to imports, foreign direct investment, population diversity and immigration, and international connectivity, will increase the pipeline of export ready firms, reaffirm the Los Angeles region as one of the world's most globally-oriented metro areas and serve to establish a more sustainable regional economy.

## THREE CORE STRATEGIES

To drive towards achievement of the three objectives, the Export Plan puts forth three core strategies:

**1** Establish the Los Angeles Regional Export Council

**2** Target High Opportunity Market Segments

**3** Market the Los Angeles Region to the World



### STRATEGY 1: ESTABLISH THE LOS ANGELES REGIONAL EXPORT COUNCIL

Establish the Los Angeles Regional Export Council (LAREx) to best ensure a unified, sustainable, regional export effort over at least the next decade. LAREx will do this by coordinating existing export services and providers into a responsive regional export network; developing and maintaining critical export research, information and a regional export website; and supplementing existing programs with critical new support. Through its associated Export Champions program, this concept will also include a “proactive promotion plus” program that actively seeks out, recruits and supports SME manufacturers of high value added products that demonstrate strong export potential (see Proposed New Export Programs below for more detail).

### STRATEGY 2: TARGET HIGH-OPPORTUNITY MARKET SEGMENTS

Strategy 2 places focus on the areas of greatest export opportunity related to companies, industries and global geography. It stresses the need to target and focus, especially given the current resource-constrained environment. The market assessment revealed that the majority of companies entering the export services system in the Los Angeles region are not export ready. This creates a bottleneck for export services providers that inhibits their ability to focus limited resources on those sectors and companies that offer the greatest potential to export. The assessment also revealed that a very high percentage of exports and growth in the Los Angeles region comes from companies in a core group of local industries and are consumed by end users in a core set of foreign markets.

Core tactics for this strategy are:

- 1 Focus on Export Ready Companies:** Focus on export ready firms, defined as “export active” and “export capable.” As opposed to promoting exports broadly, this effort will focus on proactively identifying high potential companies and supporting them throughout the process. The goal is to turn export capability into export commitment. Those companies entering the export system that are not ready to export will be referred to an early export training program or other appropriate services provider.
- 2 Target Twelve Export Industries:** Focus proactive marketing efforts on 12 select industry targets in both goods and services sectors; 10 of which represent over 77 percent of the Los Angeles region’s total exports and 90 percent of export growth from 2003 to 2010. These high value targets include: aerospace and subcontractors; computers and electronics; energy and

green technologies; medical and dental equipment/instruments; chemicals (including pharmaceuticals); machinery manufacturing; apparel and fashion; professional, scientific and technical services; royalties from intellectual property (including film and television); travel and tourism; and education.

- ③ **Target the Pacific Rim:** Building on California's location specific advantage on the Pacific Rim, export programs will place primary geographic focus on Asia Pacific and Latin American countries on the Pacific Rim. This will best leverage the connections already established between the Los Angeles region and the global market.

### STRATEGY 3: MARKET THE LOS ANGELES REGION TO THE WORLD

Strategy 3 seeks to further establish a global business identity and presence for the Los Angeles Region that will open doors and create business opportunities for the region and its companies overseas. Currently, the Los Angeles region and the state of California do not have consistent marketing/branding efforts that focus on business, beyond tourist-centric efforts. The region's image is perceived to be based more on Hollywood, tourism and lifestyle, than on the rich base of industries, companies, and innovation that are also critical drivers of the local economy. Because the state does not have an international trade office, the state and region have also lacked representation at global trade fairs and events and the wide array of locally-based international efforts have not been well-coordinated to maximize the brand and story.

This weak business identity is not limited to how the region is portrayed overseas, but also how local businesses and residents view the Los Angeles market they operate within. There is a low level of local awareness that the Los Angeles region is the largest manufacturing center in the United States and that it is the nation's largest exporting region. This strategy seeks to ensure that awareness of the Los Angeles region as a global business center is high, both globally and within the region itself.

Tactics for this strategy include:

- ① **Export Marketing:** Develop a marketing program and theme that builds on the elements of diversity, creativity, innovation, and focuses on global connectivity and industry strengths. This marketing effort should begin with exports, but evolve to incorporate all segments of the region's overall international trade and investment effort.
- ② **Los Angeles Region/California Presence at Global Trade Fairs:** Work to ensure the region and state, and companies, are well-represented at targeted global trade fairs and events that can best promote the region and its exporters.
- ③ **Mission Trips:** Coordinate all overseas trips related to industries, countries, exports, imports, and foreign direct investment, based on established targets, to achieve maximum impact.
- ④ **Public Relations:** Through LAREx, the Port of Los Angeles, the Port of Long Beach, the Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation, the World Trade Center, and other key partners with global reach and related global missions, produce a steady stream of coordinated public relations messages and articles, both locally and in targeted overseas markets, that stress the Los Angeles region's unified international business marketing message.
- ⑤ **Collateral Materials:** Assemble information and produce web-based and printed materials that promote and support the region's marketing effort within local target industries and in overseas markets. Ensure these materials support local company export, trade, investment, and globalization efforts.



## PROPOSED NEW EXPORT PROGRAMS

### EXISTING EXPORT PROGRAM AND SERVICES PROVIDERS

The Los Angeles region is rich with export and trade related programs and services. The federal government has a major presence in the region including U.S. Commercial Services, U.S. Small Business Administration, and the Export-Import Bank. The region also has a broad set of players related to logistics (the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and Los Angeles World Airports), global trade forums (Asia-Pacific Business Outlook conference at USC and the Americas Business Forum at UCLA), regional development and international trade (Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, World Trade Center, public-private partnerships, and a broad array of Los Angeles-foreign nation trade organizations), and basic export training (Centers for International Trade Development and Trade Connect).

Given the relatively large number of export support organizations, one would expect a strong systematic

export growth record for SME's. The reality, however, points to a series of six high-level issues that significantly inhibit the current system's export effectiveness: 1) existing programs tend to be somewhat fragmented and disconnected, with varying missions, goals, sources of funding, and performance metrics; 2) each organization is faced with significant resource constraints; 3) There is a lack of clarity in program accessibility (who to go to for what and/or do programs even exist; e.g., small business export financing); 4) there are gaps in the existing set of programs, including research and information sharing; 5) the state of California has basically no international trade agency; and 6) the great majority of these export service providers do not have enough experienced professionals to effectively counsel exporters in matters related to global trade. Addressing these issues will be an important part of the Los Angeles Export Plan's activities, beginning with a set of proposed new export programs.





## **LAREXC - THE LOS ANGELES REGIONAL EXPORT COUNCIL**

LAREXC (see Strategy 1) is being established to directly address the fragmentation and gap issue with its core roles being to tie all federal, state, and local programs together into a responsive and flexible regional network; fill critical gaps in the comprehensive export system; and better leverage the network to generate a larger, more consistent pipeline of export ready companies. It was determined early on in the process that Los Angeles does not need to create a large new independent organization to lead the export effort or that recreates existing functions. Instead there is a need to establish a regional identity for existing export services; tie this wide variety of players together to act as one cohesive, regional team; and ensure the core elements of the export plan are implemented, supported, and measured. LAREXC will serve as the home for three new efforts that support its export growth and network support mission:

► **Los Angeles Export Framework:** LAREXC and the Los Angeles export effort will be anchored and supported by an export team framework or “road-map” that clarifies the roles of each export services provider; how each of these independent agencies fits into a comprehensive, cohesive regional export network; and who companies should be referred to at each stage in the export process. Initial development of the framework will involve assembly of the full list of regional export services providers and programs, including the mission, roles, capabilities, resources, funding sources, and performance metrics of each. This agency information will be combined with the experience of current export services providers to create a straightforward framework and referral system.

The framework should make it clear, for example, that New-to-Export (NTE) companies seeking basic and early export information should be referred to one of the core export training seminars produced by CITD, SBA and/or Trade Connect. More experienced New-to-Market (NTM) companies may be directed to the USEAC for more in-depth case management and planning. The framework would also be able to

steer companies, for example, to niche agencies or individuals with expertise in trade related to a specific country, industry, or opportunity. Each partner in the framework will be armed with a set of basic questions and guidelines that will help clarify the stage in the export process for each new company and where the company should be referred.

► **Regional Export Market Research and Coordination:** A new regional export market research and coordination function will be established within LAREXC to organize and assemble data in support of the regional web portal; produce and assemble profiles and reports related to regional industry and country targets; stay on top of activities and changes related to each partner in LAREXC; monitor and measure regional and company export performance; coordinate quarterly partner/board meetings; and ensure the regional export effort is effectively leveraging (and coordinating with) complementary trade and international efforts (such as trade missions).

► **Regional Export Web Portal:** A “Los Angeles Region Exports” website will be developed and maintained within LAREXC to serve as a one-stop, regional resource for companies seeking information about the regional export framework and who to go to; to serve as a regional clearinghouse for existing export data, information, reports and event calendars; provide links to all critical federal, state, local and private export-related websites; and to provide up-to-date regional data on export performance, activities and success stories. This website will be coordinated with the new national export website being created by the Department of Commerce.



LARExC will be led by a board of directors representing the core export services providers in the region, have a staff of two (executive director and researcher/coordinator), a private-sector advisory board, and initially house its administrative operations within the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. This will offer LARExC a physical home and a place to incubate as it establishes a regional presence, secures funding and proves its value. LARExC will incorporate as an independent not-for-profit organization and its set of programs and services will be funded with \$500,000 per year for an initial five-year period through cash and in-kind contributions from key local partners, newly pursued and secured federal/state government grant seed money, and private-sector matching funds.

The initial geographic focus of LARExC and the export plan is Los Angeles County (with a population of 9 million), to prove the concept and start with a manageable base of export services providers and companies. However, it is envisioned that LARExC and the overall export network effort will evolve in coming years to include the broader Greater Los Angeles region (Los Angeles CMSA), and perhaps all of Southern California. The initial board of directors will include the Office of the Mayor, Los Angeles; the Port of Los Angeles; Los Angeles World Airports; UCLA Anderson CIBER; USC Marshall CIBER; Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce; and California International Trade Development (CITD). LARExC will work to closely align and coordinate all local export efforts in the regional network (including those organizations on the board, plus other proven trade organization and program partners) with those of its federal partners, including U.S. Commercial Services, Ex-Im Bank, and the Small Business Administration (SBA).

## EXPORT CHAMPIONS

The Export Champions program, developed by UCLA and the Los Angeles Area Chamber, will connect partnering companies within regional target industries to tailored export services and training, using a field study/export business plan approach. This proactive effort to identify, reach out, and partner with companies with high export potential will fill a critical gap in the current export services system. MBA research teams of four to five students will be assigned for up to one academic year to each company to increase the pipeline of export ready companies through market research, market entry strategies, and development and execution of export business plans. MBA teams from UCLA Anderson, USC Marshall and other cooperating executive MBA programs will work with both NTE and NTM companies. They will act as resident “export champions” with the aim of opening up new country markets for existing exporters and institutionalizing export strategies in the participating companies.

The Export Champions program has already begun the process of identifying and targeting up to 15 companies to partner with during year one, largely focused on SMEs within the 12 identified industry targets that produce high value added products. However, the program will remain flexible and open to other unique opportunities that offer high potential for success or that may contribute to the overall objectives of the program. Export Champions has received a State Trade and Export Promotion Grant award from the U.S. SBA for its first year of operations, with potential to secure more funding in years two and three.





## PERFORMANCE METRICS

**P**erformance metrics will evolve from a current focus on the individual performance of each export services provider (based on widely varied measures) to include a focus on company and regional export outcomes (growth in exports and jobs) in the Los Angeles region, how well companies move through the regional export services system and achieve their export goals, and how well each organization fulfills its unique role as part of LARExC and the Los Angeles export framework. For example, short-term process goals would include an increase in the number of NTE and NTM firms that enter the export process and end up making an overseas trip (a strong predictor of export success), sign with a distributor and/or make a sale. Longer-term outcomes goals would be actual growth in exports and an associated increase in regional jobs.

## EXPORT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To best support broad growth among existing and potential exporters, a set of export-related policy recommendations for both federal and state governments are discussed in greater detail in a separate policy memo. This memo was developed by the Los Angeles MEI team based on findings surfaced during the process of developing the export plan.

The key policies proposed for California are 1) re-establish the California Export Finance Office (CEFO) to provide small exporting firms with short-term financing of up to \$500,000 (envisioned as a self-sustaining program); 2) provide visibility and connections for California, its firms and regions by committing to a consistent, major presence at global trade fairs; and 3) commit long-term funding to CITD for its critical Export 101 training seminars.

The key federal government policy issues/recommendations surfaced in the Los Angeles region fall within four primary categories:

- 1 **Move Beyond Promotion:** Demonstrate the United States is serious about exports by investing resources, increasing presence, driving change, and opening doors;
- 2 **Operate as an Export Team:** Put companies first in provision of coordinated services and in measuring success;

- 3 **Boost Export Financing:** Clarify and improve access to both working capital and export financing;

- 4 **Keep U.S. Goods Moving:** Invest in infrastructure that supports freight movement.

It is assumed that the “leveling the playing field” issues related to exchange rates, subsidies, protectionism, etc., are well understood, so these issues are not covered in the policy memo.







## SUMMARY

This Los Angeles Export Plan serves as an overview of the regional efforts that have been made by private and public institutions to create a region specific export growth strategy. The purpose is to organize local and regional export support organizations into a more effective and responsive export network that addresses the national goal of doubling U.S. exports in five years and increases quality employment through higher value SME export growth. This export plan is based on the idea that there is an on-going transition toward a Next Economy that will be more proactively international, focused on sustainable growth goals and based on real competitive advantages derived from high technology developments.

The development of a Los Angeles Export Plan is a new initiative and as such will have the growing pains that all innovative and new ventures experience. However, we note that presently there are strong institutional commitments by the core group to make this plan a success. In addition, the Los Angeles Export Plan recognizes the key policy and program interdependencies that presently exist in any national level export strategy and as such, very much anticipates working with the federal government, the state of California, and Brookings' MEI program.

Let the Los Angeles region export initiative begin.

## **EXPORT PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

The development of the Los Angeles Region export plan has been led by staff from the following regional organizations and businesses:

- Office of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (project lead)
- Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (co-lead)
- UCLA Anderson Center for Global Management/ CIBER (co-lead)
- Los Angeles World Airports
- Port of Los Angeles
- USC Marshall School of Business/CIBER

Other organizations engaged through involvement on the Steering Committee

- Center for International Trade Development (CITD)
- Deutsche Bank
- Export-Import Bank of the United States
- LA INC.
- Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation
- President's Export Council - SME Subcommittee
- U.S. Commercial Services - Los Angeles
- U.S. Small Business Administration
- World Trade Center Association-Los Angeles/ Long Beach

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Brookings also thanks the Metropolitan Leadership Council—a bipartisan network of individual, corporate, and philanthropic investors that provide it financial support but, more importantly, are true intellectual and strategic partners. While many of these leaders act globally, they retain a commitment to the vitality of their local and regional communities, a rare blend that makes their engagement even more valuable.

## **ABOUT THE BROOKINGS-ROCKEFELLER PROJECT ON STATE AND METROPOLITAN INNOVATION**

States and metropolitan areas will be the hubs of policy innovation in the United States and the places that lay the groundwork for the next economy. The Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation will present fiscally responsible ideas state leaders can use to create an economy that is driven by exports, powered by low carbon, fueled by innovation, rich with opportunity and led by metropolitan areas. Part of the Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation, the Brookings Metropolitan Export Initiative (MEI) is a ground-up collaborative effort to help regional civic, business, and political leaders, with their states, create and implement customized Metropolitan Export Plans (MEPs), from which this summary export plan is drawn. These localized export plans will apply market intelligence to develop better targeted, integrated export-related services and strategies to help regions better connect their firms to global customers, as outlined by their individualized export goals.

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