

## *Regional Resilience*

### **Overview**

In recent decades, momentous shifts in the global economy have challenged U.S. competitiveness and upended established routes of individual economic success. At the same time, large flows of people across national borders are transforming the demographic profile of the United States. Over the last decade, as globalization accelerated and federal support for cities declined, state and local policymakers began to feel ill-equipped to address the growing challenges. Generally, descriptions and analysis of these large-scale economic and social transformations use national-level data, which may be useful for comparing nation-states but do not allow for comparisons within the U.S. Regional comparisons are especially important, because responses to national economic, demographic, environmental, and social challenges are crafted in regions that have distinct capabilities and traditions. Although national policies set the context for local responses, solutions ultimately emerge through local action, and, in some cases, strongly influence national policy. State and local policymakers increasingly are seeking to implement proven approaches that can enhance regional competitiveness and contribute to the national economy.

### **Grantmaking Strategy**

Since the early 1990s, the Foundation has invested more than \$35 million in efforts that respond to major global and national challenges affecting two regions: Chicago and South Florida. This period, often referred to as “New Regionalism,” brought a flurry of new regional collaborations and initiatives across the country and a corresponding resurgence of academic interest in regional economic development and governance. Despite this mutual interest in regional problem-solving, regional practice burgeoned in advance of clear evidence of the efficacy and effectiveness of particular regional strategies.

The Foundation decided that a serious research effort that helped to elucidate emerging trends and shed light on the pathways to addressing the nation’s challenges at a regional scale would be useful to both academics and practitioners. The primary goal of this research effort is to develop new knowledge that practitioners can use to develop policies and strategies that can make their regions more resilient in the face of change.

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## Implementation

Two initiatives are the core of grantmaking in research on *Regional Resilience*.

1. The centerpiece of the strategy is the *MacArthur Research Network on Building Resilient Regions (the Network)*, which is chaired by Professor Margaret Weir at the University of California, Berkeley. The Network systematically and rigorously will examine the immediate and emerging challenges that metropolitan regions face and identify the policies, processes, and institutional responses that regions have adopted to successfully address these challenges over time. Two key assumptions form the basis of the research:
  - *All regions have a system of governance, even if this system is not visible.* Although there are no full-fledged regional governments in the United States, metropolitan regions are in effect governed by the rules and policies established at the federal and state level. A key assumption is that systems of regional governance matter because they can impede or facilitate change.<sup>1</sup> By making different systems of regional governance more visible, the Network’s research will reveal different levers that policymakers can use or barriers that policymakers must remove to enhance regional resilience.<sup>2</sup>
  - *Resilience matters to regional success.* The ability to address short-term problems in ways that generate long-term regional success is a central theme for this research. In addition to responding to shocks, a recipe for regional resilience also includes anticipating challenges and planning for them proactively. By measuring regional success over an extended period, the Network will help shape an understanding that regional success is more than a consequence of “luck,” but also is a product of decisions by actors in the public, private, and civic sectors at the local, state, and federal levels.
2. *The Metropolitan Economy Initiative*, a project of the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings Institution, is exploring the effects of globalization and technological change on metropolitan economies. Through research and analysis, the Brookings project will help metropolitan leaders understand their regional economies, advance an empirically-grounded menu of policy options and strategies, and develop policies tailored to their region’s assets, circumstances, and goals. At a national level, the initiative will inform federal and state policies that apply evidence about what drives metropolitan economic prosperity.

From time to time, the Foundation will make additional grants for research that complements these efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Regional governance includes governmental institutions within metropolitan areas, *processes*, and *policies* that influence the metropolitan area.

<sup>2</sup> Regional resilience is defined as the ability of regional actors and institutions to adapt to change over time.

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## Representative Grants

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, *Washington, D.C.*

\$1,000,000 for an initiative on the economic transformation in American cities and metropolitan areas.

INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH,  
*Washington, D.C.*

\$150,000 in support of a research project on Trade in Services and Its Impact on U.S. Firms, Workers, and Regions.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, *Berkeley, California*

\$20,000 for a study to identify gaps in the literature about regional policy design and implementation.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, *Berkeley, California*

\$400,000 in support of the first phase of the Successful Regions research project.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, *Berkeley, California*

\$3,200,000 in continued support of the Research Network on Building Resilient Regions.

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