



Salinas Inclusive Economic Development Initiative

A Cross-Sector Collaborative Approach to Creating an Inclusive Economy

UC SANTA CRUZ | Campus + Community



CAMPUS + COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT
ISSUE 2022-8

PREPARED BY: JA BULSOMBUT

[TRANSFORM.UCSC.EDU/WORK/CAMPUS-COMMUNITY/](https://transform.ucsc.edu/work/campus-community/)

Solidarity Economics

In their book *Solidarity Economics*, Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor invite readers to imagine an approach to the economy grounded in mutuality – “in the human instincts for connection and community.” Arguing that the current economy is already dependent on mutuality, they outline the theoretical framework, policy agenda and social movements needed to counter the inequality that undermines it. The book is one of many research publications co-written by Benner and Pastor on the connections between social equity and economic growth. Benner is a Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies and is Director of both the Everett Program for Technology and Social Change and the UC Santa Cruz Institute for Social Transformation (IST). Before relocating to the University of Southern California, Pastor was a Professor of Latin American and Latino studies and the Director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at UC Santa Cruz.

Building an Inclusive and Equitable Economy in Salinas

Since the Fall of 2021, Benner has been working with the Salinas Inclusive Economic Development Initiative (SIEDI), working along with IST staff and Everett Program students. Together, they support a cohort of nine community-based organizations as they work to build a more inclusive and equitable economy for the families and communities of the Salinas Valley. Some of the groups participating in SIEDI include the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, Building Healthy Communities, the Center for Community Advocacy, and Loaves, Fishes and Computers. SIEDI is funded by a \$3 million grant from the James Irvine Foundation in partnership with the Community Foundation for Monterey County. The grant supports nonprofits and community groups that work to preserve and create high quality, family-sustaining jobs in Salinas.

Uplifting Mutuality and Interdependence

Benner was invited to participate in SIEDI by the Priorities Communities Program at the James Irvine Foundation based on his past experience in social justice work and the framework he and Pastor developed in *Solidarity Economics* [Pastor is working closely with the Fresno Priority Community initiative, and Benner and Pastor support each other in each site when needed.] The framework is grounded in three key ideas. First, economies are created by people, institutions, and organizations, not by natural processes—we should always refer to “our economy” not “the economy”, to remind us that what we create, we can also change for the better. Second, our economy is dependent on mutuality and collaboration across multiple sectors, which means investment in inclusivity will lead to better economic outcomes. And last, social movements are necessary – not only to shift power relationships in our economy but also to expand a community’s understanding of mutuality, connection, and interdependence.

Each participating organization spent the first six months of the initiative conducting an internal organization assessment. Benner and his team supported the process by developing a powermap tool that helps make visible and analyze the economic development ecosystem in the region—the dominant people and organizations that shape our current economy. Using this tool, Benner then conducted workshops with each of the nine organizations, helping them develop strategies and priorities for influencing key actors in the region’s economy to support the organization’s goals. By coordinating their programming, the organizations can collectively maximize their impact in the Salinas Valley. While SEIDI’s intent is to cultivate collaboration between different community-based organizations, it also aims to strengthen relationships between these groups and labor, the private sector, and research institutions like UC Santa Cruz.

Future Directions

The SIEDI cohort attended the Institute of Social Transformation’s All-In Conference in the fall of 2022. The organizations participated in a formal session during the conference and shared their collective learnings about the work they’ve done so far. For Benner, the pandemic and its disproportionate effect on low-income communities and communities of color has rendered society’s pre-existing inequalities all the starker, making it even more urgent to rethink the role of mutuality, connection, and inclusion in our economic structures.

Further Reading

Soergel, Allison Arteaga. “Grant funding will support university-community partnership on inclusive economic development in neighboring city of Salinas.” *UC Santa Cruz News Center*, Jun 15, 2022.

Available at: <https://news.ucsc.edu/2022/06/salinas-inclusive-economic-development.html>

More information on Solidarity Economics visit <https://solidarityeconomics.org/>

Learn more about SIEDI’s journey towards building a more inclusive and equitable economy [here](#).

Questions? Contact us.

Salinas Inclusive Economic Development Initiative

<https://www.cfmco.org/salinas-inclusive-economic-development-initiative-siedi/>

cbenner@ucsc.edu