

White Paper on Global Models of Binational Regional Collaboration: The Potential for Great Lakes Regional Innovation

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Abstract

This paper provides a detailed analysis of a wide range of global models of binational collaboration. It investigates three specific levels of binational collaboration: traditional binational collaboration; binational state-provincial collaboration; and binational regional sub-state/sub-provincial collaboration. Binational collaboration at all three levels facilitates economic outcomes with greater benefits than the outcomes from each entity acting unilaterally. The major focus is on binational state/provincial and sub-state/sub-provincial regional collaboration. Through analysis and interviews, the paper creates a deeper understanding of binational regional collaboration at the state/provincial and sub-state/sub-provincial levels with the potential of creating new opportunities to leverage a diverse range of binational economic assets and strengthen the region's strategic position and competitiveness in the global economy.

We discuss 15 models of binational regional collaboration (7 European, 8 North American) to demonstrate the benefits, efficiency, progress/development, challenges, and success of binational regional collaboration. European models include EUREGIO (Enschede, Netherlands-Gronau, Germany); Oresund Region (Copenhagen, Denmark-Malmo, Sweden); Helsinki-Tallin (Finland-Estonia); Hedmark-Dalarna (Norway-Finland); Bothnian Arc (Sweden-Finland); and Ireland-Northern Ireland (UK). EUREGIO, a cross-border regional development organization in the Dutch Enschede-German Gronau Region pioneered the art and practice of European binational regional collaboration. This collaborative partnership dates back almost 65 years between the two Dutch provinces of Regio Twente and Achterhoek and the German Kommunalgemeinschaft Rhein-Ems working together to improve relations between citizens and authorities at all levels. Through this cross-border cooperation, improvements have been made in economic, infrastructural, and environmental areas.

The paper also examines the North American models of binational regional collaboration in the Pacific Northwest (Cascadian Bioregion); Blue Water Region (Southwest Ontario and East Michigan); Twin Saults Region (Northern Ontario and the Michigan Eastern Upper Peninsula); Buffalo Niagara/Southern Ontario Region; San Diego, California, USA/Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico Region; El Camino Real (El Paso, Texas, USA/Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico); and Brownsville, Texas, USA/Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico Region. The paper discusses the global importance of the Great Lakes Region (7 U.S. states and 2 Canadian provinces) as a North American model for multi-state/multi-provincial binational regional collaboration. The Great Lakes Region has abundant resources, world-class talent, and deep R & D capacity that make it an economic and innovation powerhouse.

The paper concludes that creating an effective framework for ongoing binational regional collaboration is fundamental to the Great Lakes Region and its constituent regions competing successfully in the global economy. Binational regional collaboration at both the state/provincial and the sub-state/sub-provincial levels provides an innovative economic development medium that can support small and medium-size companies (SMEs) as they enter and expand export markets. Vertical and horizontal binational alignment of policies and programs can synergize and intensify the impacts of these policies and programs on both sides of the border.