

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY EFFORTS BETWEEN CALIFORNIA AND MEXICO

Public diplomacy—the public, interactive dimension of diplomacy involving a multitude of actors and networks¹—is a critical tool in strengthening the U.S.-Mexico relationship. State and city actors in addition to non-governmental entities and private citizens have a significant role to play in building positive relationships with our southern neighbor, specifically on issues that span beyond traditional policy concerns of security and trade. California is uniquely poised to help strengthen U.S.-Mexico relations because of its geographic, cultural, linguistic, and often familial ties with Mexico. California demonstrates its ongoing commitment to the bilateral relationship through initiatives like the Mexico-LA Commission (MEXLA)², CA-Mexico Border Relations Council³, and Alianza UCMX⁴.

A spotlight on three California diplomacy efforts modeling binational collaboration:

1 The Pacific Council on International Policy strengthens bilateral ties through the work of its Mexico Initiative⁵, including the creation of the Mexico-LA Commission (MEXLA). The first commission of its kind, MEXLA represents a rare level of collaboration between a foreign national government and a U.S. city government. It focuses on deepening the cultural, economic, and people-to-people ties between the two regions on issues of mutual concern. In September 2019, LA Mayor Eric Garcetti hosted MEXLA's inaugural meeting⁶ in Los Angeles, and their work continues in 2021 with the support of Mayor Garcetti and the Office of the Mexican Secretariat for Foreign Affairs.



September 2019 Inaugural Mexico-LA Commission (MEXLA) meeting with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

MEXLA collaborates on the following issues of mutual concern: entertainment, sports, economic policy, tourism, education, healthcare, and technology.

The Pacific Council and the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI) are the non-profit partners who serve as convenors for the commission.

¹ PD Definition. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-is-pd>

² Mexico-LA Commission (MEXLA): <https://www.pacificcouncil.org/newsroom/announcing-mexla-new-effort-deepen-la-mexico-ties>

³ CA-Mexico Border Relations Council: <https://calepa.ca.gov/border-affairs-program/california-mexico-border-relations-council/>

⁴ Alianza UCMX: <https://alianzaucmx.ucr.edu/>

⁵ Mexico Initiative: <https://www.pacificcouncil.org/initiative/mexico-initiative>

⁶ Inaugural Meeting: <https://www.pacificcouncil.org/newsroom/mayor-garcetti-and-mexico-kick-first-mexla-meeting>

2 The state of California recognizes the importance of the California-Mexico relationship. To enhance collaboration, the state created the California-Mexico Border Relations Council in 2006, which serves as the central organizing body that coordinates cross-border programs, initiatives, projects, and partnerships⁷. The Border Relations Council is comprised of the leaders of eight state entities. Collectively, these entities are responsible for addressing a wide range of issues affecting the border relating to the environment, natural resources, transportation, human health, food and agriculture, emergency and consumer services, housing, and business and economic development.

3 California is a leader in cultural and educational exchange through its University of California (UC) system. In 2019, Alianza UCMX was formed through the integration of three preexisting UC system-wide programs: the UC Institute for Mexico and the United States (UC MEXUS), the UC-Mexico Initiative, and Casa de la Universidad de California en México (Casa de California)⁸. Alianza UCMX fosters strategic alliances between the UC system and counterparts in Mexico—with universities, governments, industries, and communities on both sides of the border.

Mexico is one of California's most valued partners because of shared interests and goals. The initiatives mentioned above are examples, among many, of public diplomacy efforts in the state of California. It is paramount to continue investing in the bilateral relationship through projects and entities such as these. The Pacific Council prioritizes ongoing project work in this space through the Mexico Initiative, ultimately seeking to maintain close ties and cooperation between Southern California and partners in Mexico.

Mexico Initiative Milestones

2017

Since 2017, The Council has sent an annual delegation of members to Ciudad de México to meet with Mexican counterparts for discussion on the topics of trade, immigration, and renewable energy.

2019

In 2019, the Council sent a delegation of members to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez to better understand the immigration crisis at the border and learn about policy solutions.

2021

In 2021, the Council created a *First 100 Days Memo on U.S.-Mexico Policy* offering recommendations to the Biden administration on reframing the relationship as one of strategic partnership

⁷ CA-Mexico Border Relations Council. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://calepa.ca.gov/border-affairs-program/california-mexico-border-relations-council/>

⁸ Alianza UCMX. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://alianzaucmx.ucr.edu/>