

Ryan M. Donahue

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Ryan Donahue is an expert in regional economic development and an experienced leader of cross-sector strategic planning processes. As an independent consultant and a Nonresident Fellow at Brookings Metro, he has advised more than 40 city, county, regional, and state economic development organizations on strategies related to cluster development, inclusive growth, the green economy, innovation, global trade, and economic development system design. His Brookings publications include “Rethinking Cluster Initiatives” and “Institutionalizing Inclusive Growth: Rewiring Systems to Build Local Economies”.

Professional Experience

RM Donahue Consulting

Principal

2015 - Current

Consult with public and private entities in cities, regions, and states on economic development strategy, research, organizational structure, and project implementation. Selected recent projects include:

- **Fund for Our Economic Future (Northeast Ohio):** led an assessment of implications of the green economy for inclusive growth, including impact of Inflation Reduction Act and other policies.
- **McKnight Foundation (Minneapolis-St. Paul):** developed a quantitative accountability framework to shape the Vibrant and Equitable Communities team’s strategy, measurement, and learning efforts.
- **Institute for Networked Communities:** co-authored a curriculum to help state and regional leaders deeply integrate economic and workforce development systems.
- **Columbus Partnership:** created regional inclusive growth goals and framework for action adopted by CEO leadership group representing nearly 100 top employers.
- **Greater Memphis Chamber:** developed metrics and strategy for new regional, business-driven approach to inclusive economic development powered by growth in advanced industries.
- **Greater Seattle Regional Recovery Task Force:** led a Task Force of 200+ members, co-chaired by former Governor and several CEOs, to develop a long-term Covid recovery strategy.
- **City of Seattle:** strategic plan for inclusive growth in the creative economy, implementation plan for coordinated workforce and cluster development, and guidance on Covid-19 response measures.
- **Elevate Akron:** market assessment, strategic plan, and implementation plan for inclusive economic development efforts of City of Akron, Summit County, and Greater Akron Chamber.
- **Prosper Portland (city agency):** framework for inclusive traded sector growth, guidance on metrics and structural changes, and cluster-level implementation plans.
- **TEDCO (state of Maryland agency):** nationwide assessment of models for technology commercialization and entrepreneurship services, guidance for local implementation.

Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program

Nonresident Fellow

2019 – Current

Consultant

2015 – 2019

Senior Research Assistant

2012 – 2015

Collaborate with Brookings scholars on applied research projects, with an emphasis on catalyzing new partnerships with community development, workforce, and regional planning organizations.

- **New Industrial Policy Implementers Network:** advised six “system hub” organizations to help

them implement major federally-funded industrial policy initiatives.

- **Growth Intermediary Practitioner Network:** advised eight regional economic development organizations on issues related to inclusive growth and shaping business practices.
- **Prosper Birmingham:** managed a multi-year partnership between Brookings and Birmingham designed to create a more inclusive economy, including co-designing three multi-million dollar initiatives (industry services, minority-owned business support, population health industry cluster).
- **Inclusive Economic Development Lab:** guided the creation of data-driven narrative and “business case” for inclusive growth in Denver, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Nashville, and San Diego.
- **Brookings Network on Economic Inclusion:** facilitated CEO-only sessions at three conferences, focused on practical approaches to operationalizing inclusive growth strategies at the regional scale.
- **Rethinking Cluster Initiatives:** co-authored framing paper and authored two case studies on cluster development initiatives in older industrial cities (St. Louis and Syracuse).
- **Portland, OR Economic Value Atlas:** research and guidance on integrating economic development metrics into an interactive tool designed to shape planning decisions.
- **Global Cities Initiative:** co-led development and implementation of peer-learning process for export and FDI promotion by regional partnerships in 20+ U.S. metro areas.

The Trust for Public Land

Research Director, Center for City Park Excellence

2010 – 2012

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- Managed the Center’s research portfolio, working with cities and TPL staff nationwide to analyze trends and codify best practices in financing and creating city park systems.
 - Designed and led quantitative analyses, including assessment of the quality and accessibility of 50 urban park systems and job creation impacts of park spending.

Education

University of Puget Sound, B.A. in International Political Economy, <i>summa cum laude</i>	2010
Georgetown University, Certificate in Data Analytics	2015

Selected Publications

The following reports and practitioner guides were published by Brookings Metro.

- Institutionalizing Inclusive Growth: Rewiring Systems to Build Local Economies (with J. Parilla and S. Martinez, 2022)
- Deploying Industry Advancement Services to Generate Quality Jobs (with J. Parilla, 2020)
- Rethinking Cluster Initiatives (with J. Parilla and B. McDearman, 2018)
- Committing to Inclusive Growth (with R. Barker and B. McDearman, 2017)
- Ten Lessons from Global Trade and Investment Planning in U.S. Metro Areas (with B. McDearman, 2015)
- Export Nation – U.S. Growth Post-Recession (with B. McDearman and N. Marchio, 2013)