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Best Practices for Community Engagement and Building Successful Projects

California Strategic Growth Council docket Best Practices for Community Engagement and Building Successful Projects.

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND BUILDING SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS



A Summary from the 2018 Community Leadership
Summit

December 2018

CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	3
Purpose.....	3
About California Climate Investments	3
About the 2018 Community Leadership Summit.....	4
VALUES FOR FOSTERING MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS.....	5
BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS	6
Maintaining Relationships	6
Designing Equitable Programs.....	8
Decision-Making	9
Community Preparedness & Partnerships	9
Communication.....	10
Community Meetings	12
Confirming Support and Measuring Success	13
CONCLUSION.....	14
APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF SUMMIT SESSIONS.....	15

FOREWORD

Purpose

This document was generated from conversations that took place on March 12, 2018 at the Community Leadership Summit: Best Practices for Building Successful Projects, hosted by the State agencies that administer California Climate Investments (CCI). It also incorporates some additional best practices and lessons learned throughout the implementation of CCI programs and projects.

This document was prepared in collaboration by the staff of CCI administering agencies. The audience is all CCI stakeholders, including CCI administering agencies themselves, project applicants and administrators, local public agencies, community organizations, and others that engage in any aspect of CCI programs and projects. This document provides guidance for improving responsiveness to the needs of disadvantaged communities, and our mutual goals and best practices. These lessons can be used to incorporate community leadership at many different stages of a program or project, and this document should be referenced throughout these stages.

The identified best practices are organized into seven categories:

- 1) Maintaining Relationships
- 2) Program and Project Design
- 3) Decision-Making
- 4) Community Preparedness and Partnerships
- 5) Running Community Meetings
- 6) Communication
- 7) Confirming Support & Measuring Success

This is not intended to be an all-encompassing list of community engagement best practices, but rather a roadmap for building community leadership within CCI programs and projects.

About California Climate Investments

California Climate Investments (CCI) is a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment— particularly in disadvantaged and low-income communities. The Cap-and-Trade program also creates a financial incentive for industries to invest in clean technologies and develop innovative ways to reduce pollution. CCI projects provide affordable housing, renewable energy, public transportation, zero-emission vehicles, environmental restoration, sustainable agriculture, recycling, and much more. At least 35 percent of these investments are located within and benefit residents of disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households across California. For more information, including program Fact Sheets, a project map, and to sign up for the newsletter, please visit the California Climate Investments website at: www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov.

The 2018 Community Leadership Summit

California Climate Investments programs are implementing critical climate-oriented projects in our most environmentally and economically impacted communities, while also delivering important economic and health co-benefits. Given the State's ambitious goals of reducing greenhouse gases and maximizing benefits to the most vulnerable populations, it is crucial that local communities-particularly communities that are most affected by environmental burdens - are involved in both leading and benefiting from these projects. While CCI administering agencies and project implementers have learned many lessons over the history of the program, these projects can and must do more to directly benefit communities.

Recognizing this need, the Community Leadership Summit brought together agencies administering CCI programs and cross-sector stakeholders for a collaborative event to discuss program outreach and community engagement practices in CCI projects and programs. The Summit highlighted what we've learned thus far in promoting community leadership in CCI programs and projects, showcased practices that facilitate this leadership, and hosted meaningful discussions exploring ways to build upon these practices in the future. The Summit had three primary goals:

- 1) Gather CCI programs' administering agencies, technical assistance providers, outreach partners, and community stakeholders in one place for networking and partnership building;
- 2) Create a forum to discuss the best practices to date in community engagement, outreach, and technical assistance delivery in CCI, and how all involved can continue to learn and grow in our ability to deliver benefits to environmentally and economically burdened communities across the State;
- 3) Provide information and identify people to contact about funding opportunities for CCI and related programs with a Resource Fair.

In this spirit, the format of the Summit was discussion-based and highly interactive, and brought together diverse perspectives around CCI projects and programs. The discussion sessions were co-facilitated by State agency staff, community leaders, and local stakeholders. This allowed for a diverse and honest discussion of best practices in community outreach and engagement. Opening and closing remarks focused on why this work matters, and featured leadership from State agencies implementing CCI programs, as well as advocates and community-based organizations. The discussion sessions garnered feedback from Summit attendees on the following topics:

- Reflecting on CCI Over the Years
- Technical Assistance
- Statewide CCI Program Awareness and Outreach
- Community Needs for CCI Projects
- Partnerships with Local Governments
- Maximizing Social Equity

The event was held in Riverside at the University of California, Riverside Extension Center on March 12, 2018. More information about the event, including the agenda, speakers, and video and audio recording of the sessions can be found at:

<http://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/community-leadership-summit-2018/>.

VALUES FOR FOSTERING MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS

The 2018 Community Leadership Summit reflected on years of outreach work from State agency staff, local agencies and organizations, and CCI grantees. In addition to concrete best practices that are articulated later in this document, we found overarching values that crossed many topics and conversations. These values can serve as a compass for all CCI stakeholders to collectively design and inform programs, engage communities, and deliver projects and benefits that serve communities. The best practices aim to implement these values.

Community Engagement

For the purposes of CCI, we will use the following definition of community engagement.

Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with a diverse group of stakeholders to address issues affecting their well-being. It involves sharing information, building relationships and partnerships, and involving stakeholders in planning and making decisions with the goal of improving the outcomes of policies and programs.

Building Trust

Any process involving government, project implementers, and external stakeholders requires trust to ensure successful projects and programs. Listening with intention and trying to understand someone's lived experience is critical for creating trusting relationships. In addition, honesty is also a key component of trusting relationships. Overpromising or miscommunicating can quickly erode trust. We should always be honest in our conversations; even if it means admitting we don't have the answers to difficult questions. Parties work together more effectively to implement shared goals when an atmosphere of trust is strong.

Social Equity

CCI stakeholders are committed to pursuing social equity, with the understanding that underserved communities need more assistance and attention for attaining these competitive investments. There is broad recognition across CCI stakeholders that all parties have significant work to do to increase equitable access to funding, and can use the best practices in this document to continue toward that goal.

Mutual Learning

CCI programs and projects are unique and multi-faceted, which requires cross-sector partnerships and new thinking around sustainability and equity. This means we need all kinds of partners and perspectives to realize our collective vision. As CCI stakeholders – from government, to project implementers and interested community members – we need to commit to learning from those around us, to understand the barriers and limitations that others face, and to recognize and respect our diversity of perspectives. We rely on each other's expertise – technical, community, and programmatic – to build successful projects that maximize our climate and equity goals. This will always be a collective effort.

BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS

Based on the above values, below are Best Practices for promoting community engagement and leadership in CCI projects. These practices have been identified by community residents, advocates, local organizations, State agencies, and other CCI stakeholders. These Best Practices are goals and aspirations for all investments – practices we know are important to implement, and include some that remain challenging or infeasible in present day. CCI stakeholders, and CCI administering agencies in particular, will aim to find new avenues and mechanisms to implement these practices in CCI throughout the coming years of implementation.

Maintaining Relationships

For any process involving government, project implementers, and external stakeholders, creating relationships of trust is foundational to ensuring successful projects and programs. Best practices to build trust between government and community include:

- *“We do not live single-issue lives”*
People do not experience one issue separately from another in their community. Inaccessibility to a bus stop may also be linked to poor housing quality and lack of access to a vehicle. Many issues and challenges are interconnected in people’s lives, which can compound hardships. This can be incompatible with how funding programs traditionally operate, often designed to address a single issue. When listening to community feedback, keep in mind how all these issues are connected, how we can consider those intersections, and if there are opportunities for addressing multiple challenges, whether with CCI or other resources and opportunities. State staff should stay informed of complementary efforts and additional programs, so that they can provide information when these moments arise.
- *Responding*
When listening to someone share their story and experience, there is a responsibility to respond, particularly for State staff. To build trust means ensuring that people feel heard, empowered to voice their concerns, and can understand how their input affects the process. It is important to seriously consider whether if it’s possible to enact a concrete, discrete change to address the stakeholder’s concern. If a change is not possible, responding could simply mean explaining program role and considerations, writing down what has been said, following-up with other relevant resources, a personal thank you note, or maintaining consistent communication. Regardless of whether action or demonstrable change will occur, there is always an opportunity to acknowledge and respond.
- *Acknowledge the past*
State and local agencies have had to make many decisions in rule-making, permitting, enforcement, and program development. It is important to recognize if there have been instances where residents of disadvantaged communities have not felt heard or included in the decision-making process, or at worst, have experienced harm as a result of these decisions. Before engaging with a community, try to understand past engagement, actions and decisions in that community, and ask other colleagues, too.

- *Assets-Based Approach*
CCI's focus on disadvantaged and low-income populations can lead to descriptions of communities that focus on deficits at the expense of their positive characteristics. For example, we talk about how a community has no bike lanes, or needs better access to energy efficiency programs. When building trust with communities, it's critical to recognize their incredible and sometimes intangible strengths and assets. This may come in the form of a tight-knit organizing culture, of kindness and hospitality, of strength and resilience in the face of obstacles, in historic buildings and neighborhoods, and more. When we recognize the best in others as the foundation for relationships, we can have a more honest conversation about challenges and build a realistic roadmap to success.
- *Participating*
Consider interactions outside of a traditional workshop format. This includes inviting State representatives to community events and informal gatherings, and State representatives making time for more phone calls, check-ins, and informal interactions. Make time after meetings for informal chats, to help clean up, or to share a meal with participants. This will allow for more time and opportunity to get to know each other's perspectives and approaches, and will build understanding and trust. Building long-lasting relationships begins with understanding and openness, which sometimes does not have an agenda or a specified outcome.
- *Early and Consistent Involvement*
When pursuing a community-based process, it is important that trust-building work begins early in program or project design, even prior to a funding solicitation or grant application process. Relationships and partnerships take time and continued effort. Whenever possible, begin outreach before solicitation release so that when the opportunity arises, conditions are right to pursue it effectively and meaningfully. One example is posting brief concept papers and presenting the major program points for feedback before a draft is written.
- *Get Specific*
In a statewide program it is easy and often necessary to make generalizations about different communities and regions of the State. However, when attempting to build trusted partnerships it is important to cut through regional generalities and recognize that each community, neighborhood, and street has unique strengths and experiences different issues. Community strengths and concerns may vary from neighborhood to neighborhood and listening to community specific concerns can help tailor programs to address specific community needs, or allow flexibility for various conditions.

Designing Equitable Programs

Below are practices for agencies to keep in mind during program design to encourage and incentivize community engagement and leadership. Some of these practices and additional practices are emphasized in the Funding Guidelines for Administering Agencies, available online: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/ccifundingguidelines>.

- *Planning & Technical Assistance*
CCI programs can use their funds for outreach, planning and technical assistance which can help communities build their capacity, plan projects, and submit applications. Many communities do not have ready-to-go projects with matching funds. Designing programs to include technical assistance, a pre-proposal process, and implementation assistance will help improve access for applicants that need more time and support to create and deliver competitive projects.
- *Equity-Focused Funding Categories*
Administering agencies want their programs to succeed, so they tend to fund large projects that have completed planning processes and secured matching funds, which can leave behind those communities who most need funding. Where feasible, agencies can also address equity concerns by creating categories of funding for demonstration and pilot programs, for smaller-scale or community-led programs, and/or for specific sectors like rural areas.
- *Partnerships for Smaller Grants*
Local focus and administering multiple small grants can be a challenge for State agencies. One model for implementing CCI projects on a smaller scale or in a more community-led fashion is to work with an outside partner to disburse small grants to non-profits throughout the State. This strategy allows the State agency to manage one grant, with the partner entity supporting the smaller grantees on a closer, one-on-one basis. This can also build the capacity of smaller organizations and create local jobs in grant administration.
- *Flexible Options for Disbursement of Funds*
Some CCI applicants may have smaller budgets, or may be incapable of absorbing the costs of initiating a new project. Strategies like awarding a portion of the funds at the start of a project, allowing for monthly or more frequent invoicing and processing payments more quickly, and fostering administrative and/or fiscal sponsor relationships between smaller and larger organizations or local agencies can help alleviate the financial strain on resource-constrained organizations. Each administering agency has their own fiscal and accountability requirements, so these strategies may not be available to every CCI program.
- *Funding First, Project Next*
Some community-driven programs have demonstrated that when funding is dedicated to a particular community before a project is fully formulated, it can inspire buy-in and widespread interest and involvement in a project. Location based set-asides can help communities plan for projects and provide incentives for involvement in the process. However, this approach may not work in all instances and could lead to geographic inequities.

- *Involving Youth & Developing the Workforce*
Engaging local youth in the development and implementation of CCI projects can increase localized economic benefits and broaden support for local CCI projects. Consider whether your program or project can partner with educational institutions, training programs and trade schools to provide workforce development. Also consider provisions for hiring local workers, especially local low-income workers and workers with barriers to employment. Hiring and training local workers can help bolster local support for climate-related projects in their neighborhoods. More tools on hiring and job training are in section III.D.4 of the Funding Guidelines.

Decision-Making

CCI projects and programs have opportunities to conduct a range of engagement with local stakeholders, from information sharing to creating pathways for decision-making. It is important for the public to understand how their involvement can affect the project or program. Be clear on the potential impacts that the public can expect from their involvement. Think of ways to include community in making decisions about projects that affect their lives. Below is a simple way of thinking about a community engagement spectrum for CCI project development.

- *Leadership and Decision-Making* – A leadership structure such as a steering committee is established for community members that includes decision-making and oversight power.
- *Collaboration and Partnership* – Partner with organizations in a way that informs program and project design, components, and alternatives.
- *Education and Consultation* – Inform, educate, and receive feedback for consideration in early stages of program and project design.

Community Preparedness & Partnerships

Designing and implementing CCI projects requires significant capacity and preparation. Below are some steps State agencies and potential community partners can take to prepare communities to take on designing and implementing a CCI project.

- *Community Engagement and Organizing*
Community organizing can be described as the mobilization of people to join together in pursuit of a shared goal. Communities with a culture of engagement and organizing often have mechanisms in place to ensure community is at the center of projects and programs. CCI programs can promote community leadership by increasing access to programs by following some of the recommendations in the Communications and Community Meetings sections of this report, and funding community engagement as a project cost to support enduring engagement throughout the life of the project.
- *Funding & Diversifying Partners*
Using outreach funds for well-connected community-based organizations or other local partners can bring community residents into conversations about CCI projects and programs. Partnerships with community institutions such as local schools, municipalities and community colleges can deliver additional benefits like reaching new audiences,

diversifying funding streams, and building a more holistic, comprehensive project. Additionally, having diverse partners can help in securing matching and/or leveraged funds, or expanding the capacity of smaller organizations via fiscal sponsorship.

- *Word of Mouth and Train the Trainer Models*

A neighbor is more likely to purchase an electric vehicle if their neighbor has one and explains how they went through the process. Particularly for CCI projects and programs aimed at the household and consumer level, training residents to be ambassadors for the programs can help improve participation. Consider holding classes that provide a certificate to promote a program or other models for community members to utilize their long-standing relationships to educate and inform their neighbors on opportunities.

- *Technical Assistance*

It is important for CCI projects to reflect and implement local community vision. Outside technical expertise can help make a community project stronger and more competitive. Technical assistance providers can support a local community process and ensure a more robust and effective project. This assistance could in some instances be performed by State agency staff through engagement with community leaders to assist in developing a project. If funding is available, contracting a third party assistance provider can help avoid conflict of interest and provide closer attention to the applicant.

- *Engaging Champions and Other Leadership*

Having a local champion—a trusted community leader—for a project can be incredibly beneficial. This champion, typically a person with some local influence and decision-making power, can help gather additional support from diverse partners, draw attention to the work, align resources and staffing to support the creation and implementation of a project, and improve project acceptance and adoption. Keep in mind that champions can be unexpected, and could include elected officials, local agency staff, or an influential community resident.

Communication

Maintaining consistent forms of communication between State agencies and external stakeholders improves engagement, particularly during guideline revisions, applications, community outreach, and project development. This communication should aim to consolidate and integrate opportunities to inform programs and projects, and identify meaningful entry points for participation.

- *One-on-Ones and Transparency*

Having direct, one-on-one conversations between a State agency and key stakeholders and community leaders, in addition to larger public community meetings and engagement efforts, can be a great forum for delivering personalized communication and making connections. While time and staff resources can constrain one-on-one meetings, they can be an effective way to disseminate information more widely. State agencies can also publically post questions and answers to an ongoing “FAQ” or “Q&A” document, to ensure that any information shared in a one-on-one conversation is publically available. Together, these practices build strong relationships and can help maintain critical transparency.

- *Know Related Programs*
For program representatives, it is important to communicate information not just about an agency's own program, but other related programs, whenever possible. The public expects agency staff to have basic knowledge of programs that affect them from that agency. Consider bringing information on related programs from other agencies and funding sources, and inviting staff from other agencies to participate in joint events. This is a great tool for addressing situations in which one program may not be able to address a variety of community needs.
- *Short Answer, Long Answer*
State staff and program administrators often work on complicated programs, which can lead to convoluted answers to questions from the public. When answering public questions, try to be as direct and concise as possible. Think of giving a short answer, like yes, no, or sometimes, followed by the longer explanation; then check for their understanding.
- *Social Media*
Social media continues to be an increasingly useful tool for disseminating information. Share information about funding opportunities, meetings, and project details via social media to encourage a broad base of participation. Keep a variety of media platforms in mind, as different platforms serve different audiences. Tag partners to amplify the message, as those partners are likely to share the information with their networks as well. Keep these messages short and jargon-free, and always include graphics and images.
- *Email, Videos & Remote Conferencing*
Email announcements and remote conferencing (via teleconference, webinar, and webcasts) tend to be some of the most common ways of communicating between State agencies and statewide stakeholders, given they can reach a wide audience and be accessed across the State. Recording online sessions and webinars, and creating short informative videos can help audiences access information more easily. As much as possible, agencies and stakeholders should coordinate email blasts, including cross-referencing events and opportunities, and have CCI-related content in a consistent format that is easy to understand. Major points and actions should be presented first, and background or supporting information later.
- *Accessible Website*
All programs should display information on their websites in a way that is accessible to the broader public. When developing a public-facing website, ask what kind of information the public would expect to find, including a basic description of the program, timelines on programs and funds available and due dates, eligibility requirements, opportunities and deadlines for feedback, past applicants and funding recipients, application tips and materials, and contact information to answer questions. Remember to use clear and simple language, avoid jargon and acronyms as much as possible, and to write at an accessible reading level. Keep statutory and background information at the bottom of the page. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge some disadvantaged populations may not have access to internet. Keep this in mind when designing communications materials, and consider mail options when needed.

- *Home/Community Visits*
It is important to get outside of offices and traditional meeting spaces, and take meetings into the community. These spaces can vary widely – a gym, park, backyard, even someone’s living room. Meeting spaces should be places where community feels welcome and have easy access to participate and provide their insight. Additionally, State agency staff can gain a better understanding of local dynamics and needs by visiting community spaces regularly. We encourage community partners, where appropriate, to invite State partners to meetings and events to continue building relationships.
- *Tools for Building Partnerships*
From a communication standpoint, creating tools that help CCI administering agencies, applicants and stakeholders connect with new partners on the ground can be very helpful to expanding community participation in CCI programs. For example, creating lists of local partners and organizations interested in CCI and/or comprehensive lists of all past applicants (both successful and unsuccessful), could help any interested party connect locally with others that may already be planning or implementing a project or program, and help facilitate partnerships.
- *Storytelling*
Communication efforts can tend to focus on the amount of dollars flowing to a community, the number of applications received, and other quantifiable measures of success. These data points are important, and need to be presented in a way that is digestible and meaningful to the public. Consider using infographics and other accessible data visuals to tell stories about the impact the investments have. Additionally, as this CCI work progresses, it is important to share stories and emphasize the human connection – the lives that are improved via these investments. Sharing stories of strong partnerships, successful projects, and people and families seeing improvements in their communities is key to communicating why this work matters.
- *Bring in the Youth!*
The youth are our future and often a vehicle for change and information sharing in their households. Engaging youth can help bring opportunities to their families, and create support for CCI projects that lasts into the future. Consider communication strategies that channel information directly to college students and other youth. Strategies could include creating volunteer or internship opportunities within agencies or projects, flyers targeted at students/youth or their parents, or leveraging school and athletic events to engage with families.

Community Meetings

When working to engage communities, there are some key best practices that can help make a community meeting as successful as possible.

- *Translation*
Especially for materials and events directed at community residents, materials should be translated into the common languages spoken in that community. Additionally, on-site interpretation should be provided during the event. Have headsets available for meeting

participants to interpret in real time into the languages spoken by the community. Use the EPA Environmental Justice screening tool to determine languages spoken in any area: <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper>.

- *Accessible Meeting Time, Transportation, Food, Child Care*
Most stakeholders have many obligations, including full-time and/or multiple jobs and families. Consider hosting community-oriented meetings at times that work for the intended audience, such as in the early evening or weekends, so that a diversity of stakeholders have an opportunity to attend. Additionally, consider finding avenues to get support for travel stipends or reimbursements, bus passes, snacks or a meal, and child care so those elements do not prevent stakeholders from attending. It is widely understood that State agencies are prohibited from providing some of these resources. However, it is important to remember these elements as best practices and consider creative strategies such as partnerships with philanthropy or other partners that can help facilitate providing these services.
- *Stipends to Community Organizations, Schools, and Colleges for Co-Hosting Meetings*
Partnerships between agencies or project implementers and community-based organizations have the potential to result in the best outreach and community engagement activities. Whenever possible, co-host workshops with community organizations, who can provide trusted access to community residents. Many of these community organizations have limited funding for this kind of work, are often engaged in a multitude of important efforts, and their time is valuable. Consider providing a stipend for defined tasks like garnering community input. Community organizations should also work with foundations and philanthropy to establish State agency-level outreach and advocacy as an important, emerging opportunity for their investment.

Confirming Support and Measuring Success

It can be challenging to measure community engagement outcomes. How do you measure community trust, follow-through on a commitment, or the strength of relationships? However, as CCI programs have grown and stakeholders have weighed in, some key metrics for measuring outcomes and promoting transparency have emerged as tangible ways we can assess impact in community engagement.

- *Time*
One method is to quantify the amount of time dedicated to establishing relationships of trust. Particularly from a State agency perspective, lead staff for CCI program outreach could track the number of hours they are in the field, the number of meetings, calls, and one-on-ones they conducted as a way of tracking community relationships with key organizations.
- *Audience*
While it is common practice to track number of meetings and attendance, consider tracking and maintaining data on more granular information such as the city or zip code attendees lives in, and range of organizations represented. Especially for goals to distribute funds in disadvantaged and low-income communities, tracking where people are coming from will

help identify gaps and help create a more strategic vision for dedicated community engagement.

Additionally, sometimes quantity does not equal quality when it comes to community meetings. While the goal should be to engage a wide swath of community members, smaller meetings can also be incredibly effective for relaying information and building a long-lasting relationship that can reap benefits for a longer period of time. Attendance numbers are important, but pay more attention to the quality of the conversations.

- *Groundtruthing*

Even after a seemingly robust engagement process, sometimes community feedback can get lost in the midst of many considerations in the development of a project.

“Groundtruthing” is the practice of confirming project or program details directly with stakeholders, to ensure feedback has been appropriately incorporated. Groundtruthing can also be a helpful tool and metric during CCI project and program implementation, to confirm if transparency exists and if community-identified needs are being addressed as intended. Especially for local-level projects, groundtruthing strategies include door-to-door surveying and interviews with beneficiaries.

- *Follow the Money*

While CCI programs are delivering benefits to disadvantaged and low-income communities across the State, some areas have been more successful at securing investments than others. CCI stakeholders can evaluate geographic gaps in programs, and work collectively to bolster meaningful projects in those communities. Metrics to assess geographic distribution could include investment dollars per capita, investment dollars compared to CalEnviroScreen scores, and program-specific analysis for regional funding gaps.

CONCLUSION

While this document may not capture every strategy that can and should be employed in order to promote community engagement and leadership in CCI projects, these were practices that were highlighted at the Community Leadership Summit, and have been observed over the course of the years implementing these projects. With this document, we highlight practices that should be broadly considered across CCI stakeholders - whether they are State agencies, project implementers, community stakeholders, or new partners. For CCI programs and projects to gain broad support from Californians, they must demonstrate benefits to the public, especially the most vulnerable. These practices help to empower those voices, and to make investments most useful for the communities we serve. Community leadership can provide a broader vision, direction and support for the investments, making them better for our State and our future.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF SUMMIT SESSIONS

Below are summaries of the six distinct sessions held at the Community Leadership Summit. The summaries include the session descriptions and facilitators, and are intended to recap the nature of the conversations and the primary takeaways.

Delivering Benefits to Impacted Communities: Where We've Been, Where We're Going

- *Veronica Garibay, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability*
- *Michele Hasson, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice*
- *Matthew Botill, California Air Resources Board*
- *Moderator: Colleen Callahan, UCLA Luskin School for Public Affairs*

This panel helped highlight the past and future of community leadership in CCI. Matthew Botill highlighted some key statistics from the 2018 Annual Report that demonstrated a significant uptick in outreach and disadvantaged community benefits. In 2017, administering agencies held or participated in over 350 outreach events, an increase of nearly 75% over the previous year. Of over \$2 billion dollars that have been implemented thus far, over half are benefiting disadvantaged communities. Additionally, Matthew shared some of the internal collaborative processes that are happening to increase local impact. From there, Veronica Garibay and Michele Hasson provided powerful testimony about successes and challenges that still remain. They both highlighted progress made in the Transformative Climate Communities Program, based on their participation in the program in Fresno and Ontario respectively. They highlighted that making meaningful community engagement a funding eligibility requirement was tantamount to building successful projects that reflected community vision. Both Veronica and Michele also highlighted the need for flexibility in funding – whether through advancing payment rather than reimbursing funds, or setting aside funding for smaller communities to be competitive. Throughout the discussion, there was an emphasis on the need to partner directly with communities, that residents should not have to fight for their voice to be heard or a seat at the table, and for more deliberate community decision-making roles and processes. The panel also discussed the need to look beyond CCI at other funding sources, the need to focus on climate adaptation in addition to mitigation, the importance of engaging in regulatory efforts in addition to investments, and that the need for local technical assistance remains. Along with this goal, Veronica lifted up the need for more coordination in investments and that communities need to be consistently engaged from start to finish and implementation of a project. Overall, the panel expressed hope around emerging practices and directions within CCI.

Growing California Climate Investments: Program Outreach and Awareness

- *Emi Wang, Greenlining Institute*
- *Tom Knox, Valley CAN*
- *Ilonka Zlatar, California Air Resources Board*

In this session, discussion focused on partnerships and how to use existing networks to help increase awareness of CCI opportunities. Major takeaways included the need to coordinate with community organizations, and better involve youth, high schools, and community colleges. Participants noted that community based organizations can be great partners in outreach efforts, especially if they are compensated for their time. They also discussed that other strategies for outreach include using radio advertisement, especially on bilingual radio, and sharing stories of success to inspire resident involvement. Finally, the critical need for local workforce development opportunities resonated with many participants, who noted that such programs are ideal pathways to increasing benefits to disadvantaged communities.

Connecting California Climate Investments Projects with Communities

- *Madeline Wander, USC PERE*
- *Eleanor Torres, Incredible Edible Community Garden*
- *Bailey Smith, California Air Resource Board*

At the top of this session participants were asked what “community engagement” means to them. Their answers included: “community” is inclusive of residents, but also other institutions such as schools and businesses; that engagement should be sustained over time, with agencies reporting back on outcomes; building trust and correcting “old ways” of doing business; having stakeholders involved in an inclusive process; having one-on-one conversations along with broader outreach strategies; and that engagement is a spectrum ranging from information delivery to decision-making. Participants valued engagement and workshops at reasonable hours that provide food, child care, and translation services; offered true decision-making opportunities; stakeholder education on technical aspects of work; and meaningful partnerships with community institutions. To evaluate the strength of engagement, participants discussed metrics such as number of attendees and sharing success stories. Also, groundtruthing potential projects was highlighted as a practice that allows communities to intervene and ensure that projects are truly responding to community needs.

Building Community Partnerships: Local and Regional Government Strategies

- *Cathy Wahlstrom, City of Ontario*
- *Natalie Zappella, Enterprise Community Partners*

This session highlighted that financial support of community organizations would facilitate the strong, local grassroots networks needed to disseminate information or opportunities about CCI. Public entities should help to facilitate and catalyze these partnerships by requiring that grants include funding for a community partner. Community partners can be critical members of the application team for their local knowledge and connections. This session also stressed the need for localized workforce development, where projects can enlist communities early to work at a neighborhood scale for the development of the local workforce. Some other challenges that were highlighted in forming cross-sector partnerships include challenges with alignment – either with funding, culture, and/or timeline. Additionally, knowledge gaps are common. Public/private partners must work to cross-educate each other so everyone is using the same language and

share a common vision for the project. Overall, the group noted that State, local, and regional agencies should see community organizations as valued, compensated partners and not view community feedback as a barrier or ignore their concerns. Similarly, community organizations need to educate their funders on the importance of their work and look for broader coalitions and public partners for support.

Best Practices for Technical Assistance: Project Development and Implementation

- *Monica Palmeira, Strategic Growth Council*
- *Richard France, ELP Advisors*
- *Jaydeep Bhattia, California Department of Food and Agriculture*

This session began with participants defining what technical assistance means to them. Answers included writing the proposal on behalf of a community, filling out applications, providing feedback on project design and scope, narratives, and broader ideas, and brainstorming project planning. Since most CCI programs are competitive and oversubscribed, technical assistance engagement should start early and be focused on making projects more competitive. Many expressed that while application assistance was helpful, many communities needed additional help conceptualizing a project, and also asked for grants for pre-project planning that includes technical assistance. Some potential additional measures that could be performed under technical assistance work included grant writing classes, educating youth on how to design and implement CCI projects, screening applicants to assess readiness, and targeting assistance to smaller communities.

Maximizing Social Equity in Climate Projects

- *Tamika Butler, LA Neighborhood Land Trust*
- *John Moon, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco*
- *Alana Matthews, California Energy Commission*
- *Moderator: Yana Garcia, California Environmental Protection Agency*

The closing conversation reached beyond CCI and really spoke to the bigger picture goals of this work – how do we maximize social equity in the work that we do? The speakers all brought their personal backgrounds and experiences to bear – whether that be as environmental justice advocates, State agency leaders, grassroots movement builders, or financing experts. Themes that emerged included the need to start having these conversations with race and environmental racism in mind, the importance of better understand the alignment of many diverse sectors in this climate justice work, and question whether we're serving the multiple needs of our communities. Tamika also emphasized the need for State agencies to go to communities themselves, and to not expect that the community members will always come to them. Panelists expressed that their family members, their colleagues, and especially people of color who defy many odds to participate in this work are those that inspire them most. At the end of the day, our investments reflect our values, and we should proceed understanding our responsibility in funding the transition to a just and sustainable future.