



# Central Valley Leaders Effectively Addressing the Drought

Organizational Effectiveness. Leadership Development. Effective Storytelling.



In Partnership with





#### [Central Valley Community Foundation](#)

For over 50 years, the Central Valley Community Foundation has served as the region's community foundation, covering six counties in the central San Joaquin Valley. Its mission is to promote effective philanthropy, strengthen donor legacies, build the capacity of local nonprofit organizations and deepen communities across the region. In 2015 the foundation opened its new Center for Community, starting a new chapter in its history. The foundation is the lead organization for this report. For more information, please visit [centralvalleycf.org](http://centralvalleycf.org).



#### [The California Endowment](#)

The California Endowment's mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. The Endowment challenges the conventional wisdom that medical settings and individual choices are solely responsible for people's health. The Endowment believes that health happens in neighborhoods, schools, and with prevention. The Endowment provided funding for this project. For more information, please visit [calendow.org](http://calendow.org).



#### [The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation](#)

The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation and the Stephen Bechtel Fund ("the Foundation") envision a productive, vibrant, and sustainable California that is a model of success and a source of innovation. The Foundation invests in preparing California's children and youth to contribute to the state's economy and communities, and to advancing the management of California's water and land resources. For more information, please visit [sdbjrfoundation.org](http://sdbjrfoundation.org)



#### [11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project](#)

A program of The Schmidt Family Foundation, The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project promotes a fuller understanding of the impact of human activity within the web of interdependent living systems. The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project connects organizations with good information on how to develop a more responsible relationship with the world's water, energy, and food resources. To learn more about The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project, please visit [11thhourproject.org](http://11thhourproject.org).



#### [Open Mind Consulting](#)

Open Mind offers research and consulting services that help advance social change and enhance the stability of nonprofits working to create a better world. To learn more about Open Mind, please visit [omconsult.org/](http://omconsult.org/).

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### **Special Thanks**

to our consulting partner, Open Mind Consulting, and our community partners, grantees, and artists for thinking critically about the long-term implication of water quality and water access, and focusing on the long-term solutions in the Valley.

## Introduction

Persistent California drought conditions began to impact groundwater and snowpack levels in 2007<sup>1</sup>. Governor Brown declared the end of California's Drought emergency in 2017. However, Valley Communities, as well as other communities in California, remain in a drought emergency. These conditions have pushed thousands of Valley residents to the brink of crisis – dry wells, an increased reliance on bottled drinking water and even residential relocation programs for some of the hardest hit areas. The crisis also reveals the stark reality of an inequitable water distribution system borne out unevenly in mostly rural and underserved Valley communities, often times communities of color.

The Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) in partnership with The California Endowment and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation recognized that during this period of crisis the confluence of environmental drought conditions, community health, and regional water management opened up a space for discussions about long-term drought solutions that address the complex social and economic factors shaping water distribution in the Valley.

In 2016, as a response to the 2015 foundation report, *Beyond Almonds and Blond Lawns*<sup>2</sup> - a report created in partnership with the California Endowment and the Kern Community Foundation, CVCF launched Central Valley Leaders Effectively Addressing the Drought (CV LEAD). This initiative included providing both grantmaking support and capacity-building assistance to the community benefit organizations/nonprofits working in the six-county service region of the Foundation (Mariposa, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kings Counties).

CVCF retained Open Mind Consulting as a thought partner to launch this initiative in August 2016. The Goals were to 1) Increase readiness among Valley nonprofit organizations and leaders to identify and address long-term solutions to drought, and 2) Build capacity among Valley nonprofit organizations to support and sustain their engagement in finding long-term solutions to drought, while continuing to respond to an increase in service demands due to drought conditions. This report chronicles the work of that initiative, Central Valley Leaders Effectively Addressing the Drought (CV LEAD), and presents results and lessons learned that can help guide the work of other funders interested in building capacity to address complex social and environmental challenges in similar regions of California and across the nation.

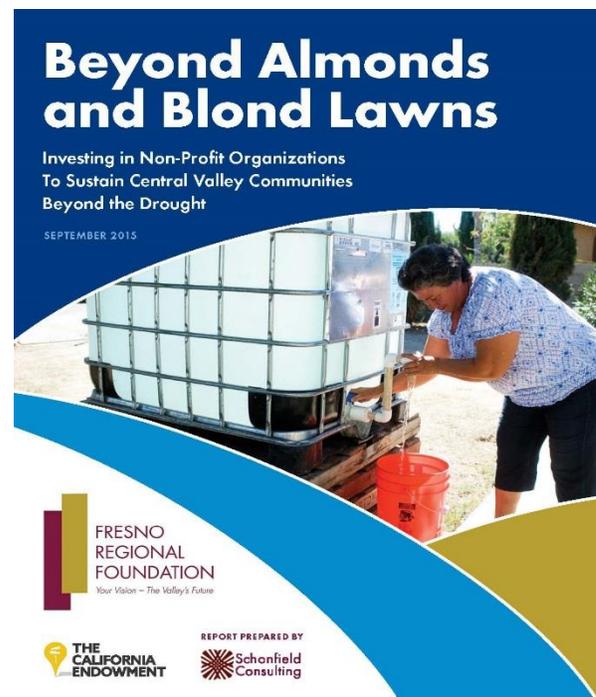


FIGURE 1 - BEYOND ALMONDS AND BLOND LAWNS - A REPORT CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT AND THE KERN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

<sup>1</sup> Water Deeply California Drought timeline - <https://www.newsdeeply.com/water/background/timeline>

<sup>2</sup> The full report can be found here: <http://www.centralvalleycf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Drought-Report.pdf>

## Initiative Design

This initiative built upon findings and recommendations from the 2015 Foundation report, *Beyond Almonds and Blond Lawns* - a report created in partnership with the California Endowment and the Kern Community Foundation in 2015. The report examines the impacts of the ongoing drought on nonprofit organizations that have been at the forefront of helping struggling individuals, families and communities and found that a critical number of leaders in the Valley were already engaged in addressing the many short-term, emergency needs of communities. The work was demanding and responsive, often leaving little time and space for collaborative problem solving around the more persistent, long-standing problems further exacerbated by recent drought conditions. The report recommendations included taking new approaches to collaboration and long-term thinking. This was especially true for meeting the needs of rural and more underserved low-income communities, often times communities of color.

The CV LEAD initiative has three program components that taken together helped develop nonprofit sector capacity to advance longer-term drought solutions: 1) leadership, 2) building capacity for nonprofits and 3) arts and storytelling. Participant selection for each program focused on the seven-county area of the Central Valley: Kern, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, and Tulare. All but Mariposa County had representatives participate in one of the three programs.

## BEYOND ALMONDS REPORT FINDINGS

The 2015 survey indicated that many organizations are struggling to keep up with clients' needs for services. CBOs need additional funding both to increase drought-related programs and to build capacity to meet client needs related to the drought.

- **Only 11% of CBOs said their organizations are well prepared** to meet the drought-related needs of their clients, and most CBOs are “stretched thin” and struggling to keep pace with increased needs. One organization explained it now provides basic needs assistance (for food, housing, utilities) to families impacted by the drought in addition to the services it already provided. Another noted, “We are not able to keep up with the enormity of demand.”
- **CBOs have developed some innovative ways to stretch resources**, including advice and referral phone lines to eliminate long travel distances for rural residents, alternative times for service provision to reach additional clients (including day laborers), and increased collaboration with other non-profits to expand service reach.
- **CBOs need additional resources and organizational support to meet clients' needs.** These include additional funds to increase service delivery of existing programs, capacity-building to build new programs and/or upgrade staff skills, and increased staff and expertise for both existing and expanded programs. As one organization explained, “The drought is beginning to affect our organization’s revenues. We receive a lot of revenue from growers and other agriculture-related local businesses.”

The full report can be found here:

<http://www.centralvalleycf.org/impact/publications/>

# The Leadership Program

The leadership program engaged a group of 40 leaders with different levels of career leadership experience. The primary outcome was to build collaborative leadership capacity through a process of project identification, development, and execution. The project will help to advance momentum in addressing long-term solutions to drought in the Valley. While we started off thinking we needed to recruit and select the most senior-level directors from organizations, we pivoted to focus on readiness and leadership diversity. This helped to build a more cross-generational leadership cohort, allowing mid-career leaders an opportunity to step up, and it presented opportunities for late-career leaders to try on a more collaborative decision-making approach independent of a leaders' status within their respective organizations.

Leadership program participants attended a series of webinars, locally facilitated collaboration labs ("collab labs"), and one larger regional convening. Facilitation of the leadership program prioritized time for strengthening regional relationships, and cultivating shared guidance toward the most promising pathways for change in rural, underserved Valley communities. This included a direct examination of water equity, economic development, community health, and sustaining a robust social safety net in low-income rural and underserved areas. Participants also explored the strategic use of the arts to convey the Valley's stories

## ATTRIBUTES OF SELECTED LEADERS

1. Affinity for collaboration and network development.
2. Familiarity with an array of formal communications practices.
3. Experience with and appreciation for rural, underserved community members.
4. Orientation toward planning and forward thinking strategic thought.
5. Understand and value the power of creative storytelling.

of need, opportunity, resilience and longer-term change in compelling ways.

## THE COLLAB LABS GOALS

1. Provide all leaders with a shared baseline of knowledge related to water quality, infrastructure and drought, nonprofit capacity for long-term change, and the value/role of arts/storytelling as a change strategy.
2. Build awareness and familiarity with other leaders and organizations in the seven-county region interested in working toward long-term solutions.
3. Generate potential targets for long-term change.
4. Prioritize purpose and value of ongoing work of the leadership cohort.

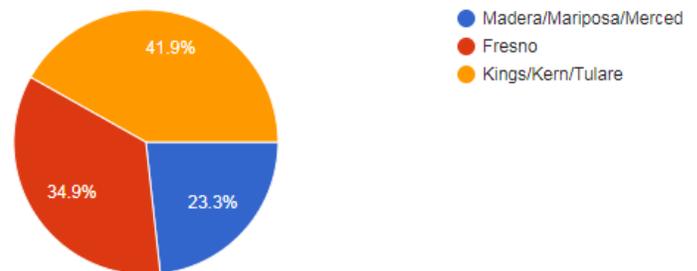


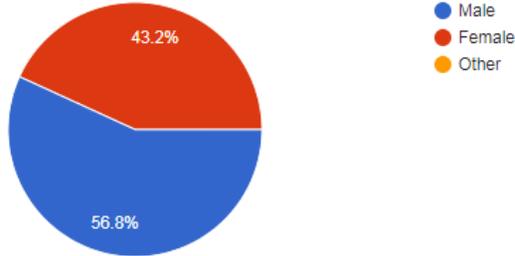
FIGURE 2 - CV LEAD PARTICIPANT REGIONAL PROFILE

The Collab Labs were held in three locations to accommodate different schedules and to ensure that distance or geography did not reduce opportunities for participation. Even though attendance clustered most in Fresno, attendees expressed the value they saw in having options for other meeting locations, especially in Visalia.

## CV LEAD Leader Profile

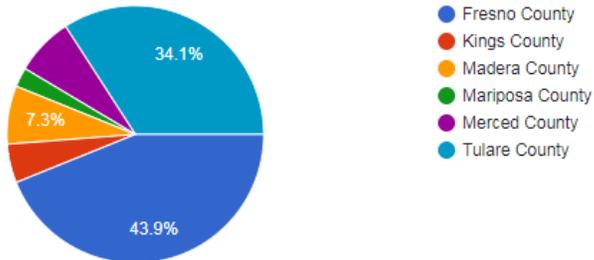
### What gender do you identify with?

44 responses



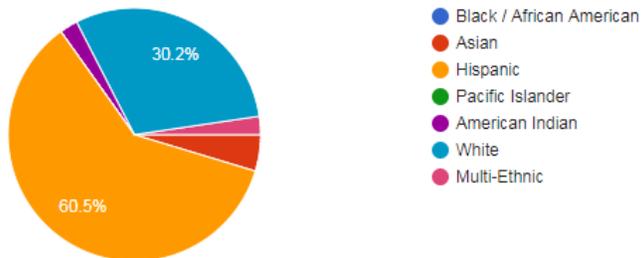
### What county do you live in?

41 responses



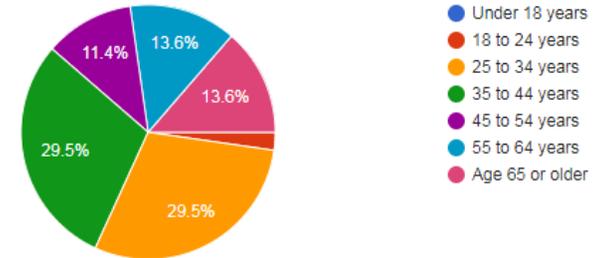
### What is your ethnicity?

43 responses



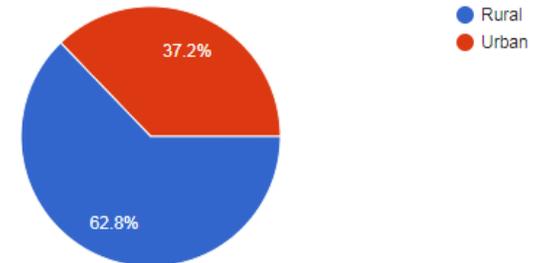
### What is your age?

44 responses



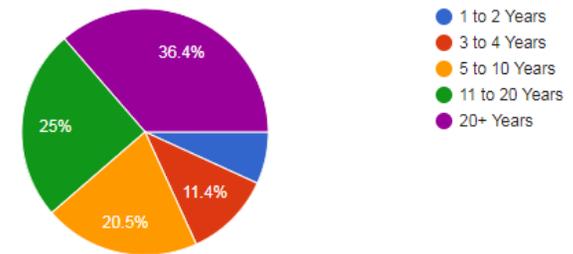
### Do you live in a rural or urban community?

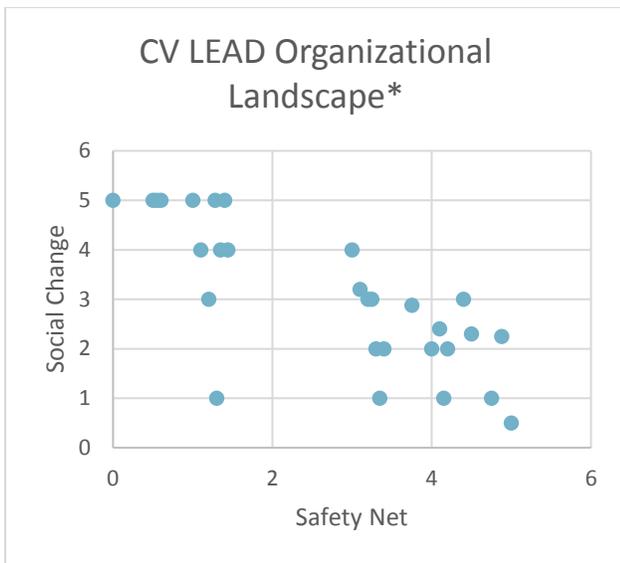
43 responses



### Years of experience in the CBO/Nonprofit/Public sector?

44 responses





**FIGURE 2 - BASED ON INPUT FROM REGIONAL COLLAB LABS (FRESNO, VISALIA, AND MERCED)**

Leaders came from affiliated organizations with a range of organizational missions. This range had potential

implications for how and to what extent leaders could take their learning from CV LEAD back to their organization and act upon it. Leaders examined this dynamic through a visual mapping exercise at each Collab Lab. Individual lab mapping results were combined to provide a collective snapshot of the organizational landscape (see figure 2), visualizing the clustering of organizations oriented around a safety net function (providing direct services to clients often on a recurring basis) or those more oriented to taking an advocacy role in the community (providing information and direct community engagement to help bring about a longer-term change in social conditions). This helped to foster a discussion of current and desired capacity within leadership organizations to undertake more intentional work to address and support long-term drought solutions. Figure 3 describes the areas of capacity needs that were defined by the group thought out the collab labs

Internal Organizational Effectiveness	Leading for Collective Impact	Effectuate Social Change
Fundraising, resource development, diversified funding and planning for funding.	Collaboration, communication between different types of NGOS.	Re-peopling boards and councils –power building.
How do you change your framework at all levels from line staff to boards, to move the organization toward social change?	Clarity on the different roles-shared goals-ensure this is defined by the community.	Break down systemic problems: Agency-Who has the power to speak and act? Historicity-Know your political and cultural story. Colonization. Changes of natural and social geographies.
Managing staff.	Data collection and sharing (collaborative).	Information dissemination and material.
Multi-year funding.	Resource agreements with other CBOs.	A better understanding of complex drought issue, in order to explain to our community.
Sabbaticals for veteran leaders.	Volunteer development/community leadership.	How do we tell this very complex story to the community members?
	Funding to create and maintain a network of Valley water stakeholders.	Populations affected by drought-important they tell their own story, the idea of sovereignty over the issue.

**FIGURE 3 - AREAS OF CAPACITY NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY LEADER**

As leaders focused on finding a long-term solution to this complex and layered social and environmental problem of drought, it became harder and harder to avoid a direct consideration of power, history, and politics in the Valley. The veil of neutrality fell off, so to speak, as the group drilled down on the three most popular project targets/topics:

- Land use, agriculture, and future of economic development.
- Develop a message/story to deliver outside the valley, bringing perspectives of rural, disadvantaged communities forward (“Changing the narrative”).
- Community engagement on new/existing water policies/programs.

“AS LEADERS FOCUSED ON FINDING A LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THIS COMPLEX AND LAYERED SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM OF DROUGHT, IT BECAME HARDER AND HARDER TO AVOID A DIRECT CONSIDERATION OF POWER, HISTORY AND POLITICS IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY.”

Disagreements arose as to the best way to address long-standing inequities within communities, how to include small-scale farmers and large-scale agricultural businesses in finding long-term solutions, and how to message around the importance of water for residential consumption. This was especially pronounced for the working group looking at community engagement, especially when discussing strategies for reaching non-English speaking and low-income communities, which often face broken or limited water conveyance systems. It raised questions about the purpose of agriculture and farming in the Valley, as one leader put it, “is agriculture simply a business to make a profit, or is it a service helping to feed people?” These types of questions were anticipated, in part, and facilitation strategies were utilized to parse out the competing values and trade-offs to any one approach over others in designing a final project.



FIGURE 3 - MERCED COLLAB LAB

More moderate views on long-term solutions focused attention on inclusive policy and rulemaking that incorporates not just the interests of “activists” and community members, but also farmers and businesses. More intensive views of change focused on calls for equity and even parity in policy and rulemaking, so that rural, underserved communities of color can be on par with larger, more powerful interest groups. This was probably best expressed in the comments of one leader from Madera County, who argued that CV LEAD needs to marshal a project that “speaks truth to power” and not just pursue a project that “garners sympathy by pitching stories about poor families without jobs and drinkable water.” The latter quote is most akin to what has already been done by several state and regional agencies, such as the provision of bottled water, housing vouchers for relocation, and other temporary solutions (e.g. drilling additional wells, buying existing

## LEADERS REPORTED THAT THEY NOW:

- Think about long-term solutions to drought conditions.
- Better understand the role nonprofits can play in addressing the drought.
- Identify additional capacities within their organizations that they will need to address long-term issues of the drought.

private water allocations from farmers for use as a residential water source).

## IS EVERYONE READY TO

Moving an eclectic group of leaders toward a shared vision for action takes time. Leaders come from organizations with missions focused on social safety net functions as well as groups with more advocacy-oriented missions.

Some leaders will take longer than others to internalize the goals and deeper purpose of the overall initiative. Recognize this as a hallmark of collaboration and not an indicator of any failure to establish understanding.

Recognize and value the benefits of orientating and grounding all the participants in a basic body of knowledge and a set of interpretive lenses before asking the group to articulate their shared recommendations.

One respondent who worked in public health shared this perspective, *“the things that we have been galvanizing are [mostly] in the public health and environmental health agencies, to work together and establish ties with these organizations and using the resources in both agencies; a good opportunity to leverage the strengths of each agency to develop programs for the drought mitigation.”* In terms of improving the involvement of local Valley residents in finding long-term solutions, the use of the arts to better engage with the community was very influential for participants. This was cited as one of the more innovative and interesting ways to build capacity or to improve existing engagement activities within their organization. Some indicated that it was a means to

communicate that didn't come off like a lecture. Indeed, one respondent indicated that his main take away from the leadership program was, *“looking at what the communities' needs are and using some of the tools from CV LEAD, to better engage and identify what the needs are of the community”* so the overall level of engagement is more effective.

### 2017-2018 Leadership Project

A consensus was reached in selecting a final proposed project at the March 2017 convening. The chosen project will focus on changing the narrative around water and drought, to emphasize themes of equity, and communicate that message inside and outside the Valley through the use of a strategic media campaign.

The leadership group identified and vetted a set of objectives and potential audience targets for the campaign at the meeting. The group will continue to refine the audience targets and sharpen the overall project plan before undertaking and implementing the campaign in 2017. The leadership group expressed a need to continue their work with support from CVCF in the form of:

- Supplemental project planning meetings with facilitation support to maintain continuity and ensure strategic direction of the group process.
- Technical assistance related to communications and public relations to ensure their campaign messages and delivery to move audiences and help reach their goals.
- Continued facilitated convenings, which allow the leadership group to continue learning from each other and sharing efforts throughout the Valley.

## Capacity-Building Program

A cohort of eight organizations (Cohort) was selected to participate in a short-term capacity building program. As many as 30 organizations were invited to apply to the program. However, given the budgetary restrictions of the overall project and the desire to provide financial support to the participating organizations to pursue additional capacity building activities, the max cohort size was set at a max of eight organizations. One organization dropped out of the cohort citing the need for additional financial support

“COACHING ALSO ALLOWED FOR THE DELIVERY OF TARGETED INTERVENTIONS AND GUIDED SUPPORT FOR NEW LEADERSHIP PRACTICES, WHICH COMPLEMENTED THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR PLANS.”

needed in order to justify their participation.

Cohort members recognized a need for more capacity to maintain or expand their work, having each experienced an uptick in service/advocacy as a result of the drought. Each organization presented different levels of readiness for capacity building work, almost evenly split between organizations at an introductory level (e.g., emerging understanding of organizational needs) and those organizations with leaders that were ready for more moderate-level interventions (e.g., working knowledge of needs and project ready).

Given the readiness levels, we chose to combine an objective, criteria-referenced capacity building tool (the iCAT) with a global analytic tool (Organizational Pyramid). The combined use of these tools fosters a critical review of an organization’s capacity and enhances leadership readiness to undertake targeted capacity-building projects. Taken together, the tools help organizational leaders reconcile their own subjective view of organizational capacity against systematically collected assessment data. Results from the use of both tools helped in the design and

refinement of the overall CV LEAD capacity building program and the development of individual capacity-building plans.

CVCF delivered an introductory seminar focused on establishing Cohort relationships, introducing basic capacity building concepts (e.g., goal setting, organizational growth, etc.) and exploring the practice of data-informed decision making for nonprofits. These four content-specific sessions were focused on:

1. External Communications and Marketing
2. Fundraising and Funding Opportunities for Drought-Related Services
3. Shared and Distributed Nonprofit Leadership
4. Evaluation, Assessment and Data Management
5. Communicating about the Drought

Each organization completed the iCAT and received a detailed organizational profile and functional score. Each leadership team reviewed the individual results on-line before sharing and discussing results with their peers during the second Cohort Workshop. Finally, individual results were interpreted and compared to their Organizational Pyramid during their first coaching

## CAPACITY BUILDING COHORT

1. Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability
2. Madera Coalition for Community Justice
3. Urbanist Collective of Visalia
4. Food Link of Tulare County
5. Cutler-Orosi Family Resource Center
6. Merced Lao Family Community, Inc.
7. Food Commons, Inc.

session with Open Mind.

After this period of review, reflection and discussion of iCAT results, each cohort then developed a capacity-building plan (Plan). Plans emphasized goals and objectives tied back to identified areas of need through the iCAT and a critical discussion of their Organizational

Pyramid. Plan goals were then shared and discussed among members of the Cohort and reviewed periodically as they related to the four content-specific sessions. Coaching also allowed for the delivery of targeted interventions and guided support for new leadership practices, which complemented the successful implementation of their Plans.

Cohort members also chose to participate in check-in and review calls between formal workshop sessions. The check-ins, referred to as peer learning office hours, helped to model and facilitate group learning among the members. A different volunteer from the Cohort led each session. Open Mind also provided a written meeting guide to prompt and support participants through a sharing and problem-solving process. Open Mind also administered the calls and conducted a preparatory meeting with each volunteer facilitator before the scheduled office hours phone call. Open Mind also modeled facilitation approaches during the second call. The office hours helped to advance peer-to-peer learning and problem solving on capacity-building tasks between workshops.

A final seminar allowed for reflection on conceptual learning and cumulative progress on Plans for each organization. Cohort members will continue to draw

down from their remaining coaching hours through March 2017, as they continue working toward remaining Plan goals. Referrals to consultants with backgrounds and expertise in areas related to ongoing capacity needs are also being made, and Cohort members will decide whether or not to continue working on their current plan goals or pursue additional goals upon program completion.

In terms of improving engagement, CV LEAD participants indicated that the use of the arts to better engage with the community was very influential for them.



**FIGURE 4 – CAPACITY BUILDING COHORT MEMBERS SHARED LEARNING WITH EACH OTHER**

## Integrating Arts and Storytelling

An emphasis on arts and storytelling was incorporated into each of the CV LEAD programs in different ways. The focus was on arts and storytelling as a method for helping individuals and communities outside of the Valley grasp the impact of the drought.

Leadership program participants were initially introduced to the use of arts and storytelling through a series of interactive presentations during each Collab Lab. Experienced Valley artists and arts leaders conducted the presentations. The presentations focused on the practice and effectiveness of using art to convey stories, engage people in critical reflection and approach complex topics through the use of storytelling and first-person narratives. These presentations sparked a number of leaders to think differently about strategies to bring about long-term drought solutions, and ways they might apply such approaches to other issue areas facing their organizations.

The capacity-building program incorporated guidance on storytelling practices and methods within modules on Communications and Marketing and through one-on-one coaching sessions with participating organization leaders. The emphasis was on building familiarity with resources and platforms that can help organizations tell stories about their work, but also to link their story to those of others in the Valley working toward long-term drought solutions.

Leaders cited this as one of the more innovative and interesting ways to build capacity or to improve existing

engagement activities within their organization. Some indicated that it was a means to communicate that didn't come off like a lecture. Indeed, one respondent indicated that he was "looking at what the needs of their communities are and using some of the tools from CV LEAD to better engage and identify what the needs are of the community" so the engagement is more effective.

CVCF awarded three mini-grants through a competitive process to support collaborative projects between CV LEAD participants to use the arts to tell stories about 1) community resiliency to find long-term drought solutions and 2) to help reframe the discussion of the drought. There was an explicit goal to reach audiences outside of the Valley, to build momentum for change, including people living in other California cities or regions, as well as those living in other parts of the United States. Funded organizations and their projects were:

- Visalia Arts Consortium – Urbanist Collective for media and marketing materials that highlight the young faces of the drought in rural Valley settings
- Fresno State - Office of Community and Economic Development and Teresa Flores for media and marketing materials that highlight the young faces of the drought in urban Valley settings
- Rose Foundation for Communities & the Environment and Janaki Jagannath for the Photo Essay of Small Farmers program.

## Artists and Cultural Leaders Initial Learning and Reflections

We believe this initiative design, as well as our initial learning and reflection on CV LEAD during the past year, contributes to a rich understanding of the social and aesthetic efficacy of art for change.

### **1. Artist roles overlapped across programs, artists were seen as experts, learners, informed guides, teachers and community leaders.**

CV LEAD program participants<sup>3</sup> were initially introduced to the use of arts and storytelling through a series of interactive presentations known as “Collab Labs” during the Leadership Program. Experienced Valley artists and cultural workers conducted the presentations. Presentations focused on the practice and effectiveness of using art to convey stories, engage people in critical reflection and approach complex topics through the use of aesthetic storytelling and first-person narratives. This resonated deeply with CV LEAD participants and sparked a number of leaders to think differently about strategies to bring about long-term drought solutions, but also on other topics as well. The Leadership Program has culminated in a plan to implement and complete a collaborative project that helps to shift the narrative on water and drought both within and outside of the Valley.

Including artists and cultural workers in the Capacity-Building Program cohort also enhanced participant understanding and appreciation for artists as leaders and partners for change. The Capacity-Building Program incorporated guidance on storytelling practices and methods within modules on Communications and Marketing and through one-on-one coaching sessions with participating organization leaders. The emphasis was on building familiarity with resources and platforms that can

help organizations tell stories about their work, but also to link their story to those of others in the Valley working toward long-term drought solutions.

### **2. Project identification and design were collaborative endeavors, emerging from the engagement of artists and cultural workers within the initiative.**

Artists and cultural workers were seen as leaders within the same ecosystem, working alongside nonprofits and public agencies. Project identification emerged after several months of overall engagement among leaders, with artists serving as interpreters and guides on proposed project design. Three grants were awarded through a competitive process, to support collaborative projects between CV LEAD participants using the arts to tell stories: 1) about community resiliency to find long-term drought solutions, and 2) that help reframe the discussion of the drought, as a counter-narrative. There was an explicit goal to reach audiences outside of the Valley, to build momentum for change. This included people living in other California cities or regions, as well as those living in other parts of the United States.

### **3. An introductory springboard session was held with artists and cultural workers several months before issuing a request for proposals.**

Open Mind refers to preparatory gatherings of artists and cultural workers as springboard sessions. Springboard sessions help set the stage for ideas, practices, and partnerships that will spring from a group of artists and cultural workers with some shared departure points and strategic alignment. In the case of CV LEAD, artists and cultural workers expressed their own limited knowledge of drought and Valley water distribution when contacted initially to participate in the initiative. The artists had an interest and desire to be part of CV LEAD, but there was also an acknowledgment by the artists

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<sup>3</sup> Participant selection for each program focused on the seven-county area of the Valley: Kern, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, and Tulare. All but Mariposa County had

representatives participate in at least one of the three program components.

that they, too, needed to be oriented and guided by a deeper understanding of the problem at hand.

Springboards also allow for the introduction of conceptual tools and models that can be used to expand assessment opportunities upon project completion<sup>4</sup>, and guide discussions of art-for-change aesthetics. Springboard sessions help strengthen the grant application pool and increase alignment of proposed projects with the focus on long-term change through shared leadership and nonprofit partnership.

For all these reasons, additional consultation and guidance sessions were arranged for the artists by CVCF to:

- Support artists as they implement projects,
- Increase the complementarity of their work with that of the larger leadership group project to shift the narrative,
- Offer technical assistance and professional consulting to strengthen the distribution and dissemination tactics for bringing the stories outside the Valley, while also harmonizing the approach to increase the impact of the arts grantmaking.

#### 4. **Coaching and support facilitated dialogue among artists.**

Timing and budget changes on the front end delayed the implementation of the springboard session. As a

result, selected projects were designed and envisioned during the mid-point of the CV LEAD initiative and awarded later than expected. For all these reasons, additional consultation and guidance were arranged for the artists by CVCF to:

- Increase complementarity among all the projects in order to shift the larger drought narrative,
- Offer technical assistance and professional consulting to strengthen the distribution and dissemination tactics for bringing stories outside the Valley,
- Explore and refine desired outcomes and impact
- Support artists as they implement the projects.

CV LEAD participants will be invited to attend final project presentations where they will learn how to integrate project content into their own drought-related work. We are interested in learning if project portability increases the likelihood that CV LEAD participants further disseminate project stories of drought and community resiliency, and how audiences respond to the counter-narrative. This will also provide an opportunity to closely evaluate some aesthetic attributes of the art, such as “stickiness”, “disruption” and “communal meaning<sup>5</sup>”.

## WHEN INVESTING IN THE ARTS TO CREATE TOOLS FOR CHANGE:

- Invest time early on and create learning opportunities for artists and cultural leaders to develop an understanding of the topic and your chosen approach to change.
- Select projects that demonstrate portability to locations outside of the Central Valley.
- Project design should focus on access by the largest number of viewers.
- The use of digital media and other on-demand mediums help in reaching outside the Valley.

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<sup>4</sup> Models and concepts were drawn from *Animating Democracy, Arts for Change Outcomes*

<sup>5</sup> As defined and presented in *Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change*, *Animating Democracy*.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

**Grantors focused on drought mitigation should approach their grantmaking with recognition of the history and power dynamics that shape community engagement in the Valley.**

Funders seeking to level the playing field when it comes to water should invest in the capacity of community-benefit organizations that work with rural, underserved populations and are tied to larger networks of leaders, such as CV LEAD. This will increase the likelihood that current crisis response to drought goes beyond short-term solutions.

Organizations working in isolation or within a county or regional ecosystem will need a larger network or institutional web to bring rural and underserved population needs to bear on long-term solutions. It is much easier, both in scale and professional practice, for CBOs and their leaders to focus in on responses to and engagement in local and regional efforts that ease the crisis in the short-term. The power and equity issues at stake for bringing about longer-term solutions put most CBOs in a precarious situation, especially in their local or regional context. Building capacity to strengthen CBO collaboration throughout a region and developing more skills to leverage communications and advocacy efforts that can allow smaller groups to have a bigger, cumulative impact in the mid-term, will build momentum toward longer-term change.

**Relationship building and subsequent trust building are critical first steps**, and without the time and space for these, this initiative would have been less successful. Allowing for the emergence of group cohesion via group session built the trust needed for both capacity building and leadership development groups create shared aspirations, vision, and goals. Water and the Drought have multiple vantage points from economic impacts to food production, to water as a human right.

1. Building nonprofit capacity requires deeper relationships.
2. Executive directors and other senior leaders must be fully present.

**Informed, facilitated support for leadership development must be sensitive to non-profit realities and Valley history.** Valley nonprofits are at varying levels of “capacity” for organizational development and the drought has strained these limited resources even more. Tailored support should address all areas of the spectrum, from 101 introductory topics to very tailored, issue-specific support.

1. Devote tailored, data-informed support to grantees and partners.
2. Develop capacity-building plans with leadership teams through a collaborative, data-informed process.
3. Capacity-building grants should complement the chosen capacity-building interventions.
4. Diagnostics and professional guidance should be blended in response to organizational need.
5. Consider capacity needs from an internal lens (what an organization needs to function well) and from an external lens (what will leaders of these organizations need to do well together).
6. Time horizons must be realistic, and even short-term changes may not surface until after the close of a formal intervention period

**There is an inverse relationship between operational budget and the necessary amount of capacity-building grant support.** As funders, our stewardship guidelines conclude that a financially and organizationally stable community group will be more successful in managing and stewarding larger grants. This does not hold true when working to increase organizational capacity. The smaller the organization, the larger the financial investment to the organization should be to account for dedicated

time and space for learning while maintaining the organization's services at the same level. A top request from grantees is that Foundations support capacity building efforts with additional funds and time—for the critical implementation stage of any capacity-building efforts. With the CV LEAD initiative, each organization used the project to go a bit deeper based on and tailored to its own needs.

**Once a grantmaker embarks upon the capacity building activities, the non-profit beneficiaries will acquire a deeper appreciation for and recognition of capacity-building assistance. This means funders**

**will likely need to continue or leverage support over multiple years.** Change at any organizational level takes time, and change within high-stressed Valley non-profits is no different. In a limited engagement, such as this, incremental progress may be the best outcome for participant organizations. Recognizing the power dynamics and history of the Valley, we know long-term solutions are complex and will take the time to implement in full. From CVCF's history in capacity building work, we know a minimum commitment to three to five years will begin to yield changes in organizational practices and behaviors.