

2019 Blue Sky Center Strategic Plan



This report is intended to lay out, prioritize, and communicate the goals, milestones, and necessary steps to meet them in order to sustain and increase the impact Blue Sky Center in 2019 and beyond.

Purpose & Vision

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

In 2019 we set out to make space for Cuyama Valley leaders and doers, to celebrate the abundance of the Cuyama Valley, and to share resources, time, and innovative ideas. Blue Sky Center is a facility designed to inspire creativity, cultivate small manufacturing enterprises, and foster new investment that contributes to a thriving regional economy and celebrates the Cuyama Valley culture.

We, the Blue Sky team, inspire creativity by partnering with designers, artists, and rural practitioners to share space with community members and create opportunities to discuss the most vexing challenges in our region.



Blue Sky Center Mission & Vision

The mission and vision represent clarity for Blue Sky Center.

VISION STATEMENT

Building models for resilient, thriving,
and inclusive rural economies.

MISSION STATEMENT

Blue Sky Center's mission is to strengthen our
rural communities within the Cuyama Valley
by supporting entrepreneurs and building our
regional creative and economic resources.

TAGLINE

"Made in Cuyama"



Redefining Rural

The Cuyama Valley, a 300-square-mile high-desert region, is home to 2,000 residents and lies just north of the Los Padres National Forest and south of the Carrizo Plain National Monument. The Cuyama Valley contains three unincorporated townsites: New Cuyama, Cuyama, and Ventucopa.

New Cuyama (pop. 551) was founded as a company town built by the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) in 1950. ARCO provided a high standard of living and incentives for working families and residents including housing, recreational opportunities, small business development, and community events until ARCO folded its local operations in 1978.

Today the townsite of New Cuyama includes 216 homes, the Cuyama Valley High School, the Cuyama Valley Recreation District office, a family resource center, a post office, local utilities and services, a library, a small health clinic, and a number of commercial businesses. Blue Sky Center operates out of renovated industrial and office buildings from the ARCO era. The larger Cuyama Valley is home to a number of agricultural operations, which is the primary industry, along with oil production and ranching.

Like so many places, New Cuyama and the Cuyama Valley face the impacts of globalization, namely when a single company once provided the majority of employment and infrastructural support. Depopulation across rural America has left communities to deal with inefficiencies of scale and underutilized, aging infrastructure, stymied by the ethos of “what used to be.” Rather than corporate or governmental leadership, rural communities often look to faith-based organizations, civic groups, and neighbors to carry the community safety net. By addressing the root causes of inequity within our rural places, community leaders can forge more effective public-private collaboration across all sectors, ultimately supporting rural opportunity and investment.

2019 Organizational Chart

HOW WE GOVERN OURSELVES: WHAT IS DYNAMIC GOVERNANCE

The Dynamic Governance process is an all-inclusive organizational method which produces high levels of engagement from participants. It leads to more efficient decision-making in team meetings, better vetting of ideas, and more profitable and sustainable outcomes for the organization.

Dynamic Governance, if instituted adeptly, gives everyone the motivation, power, and tools to be highly innovative and productive.

Explaining the organizational chart:

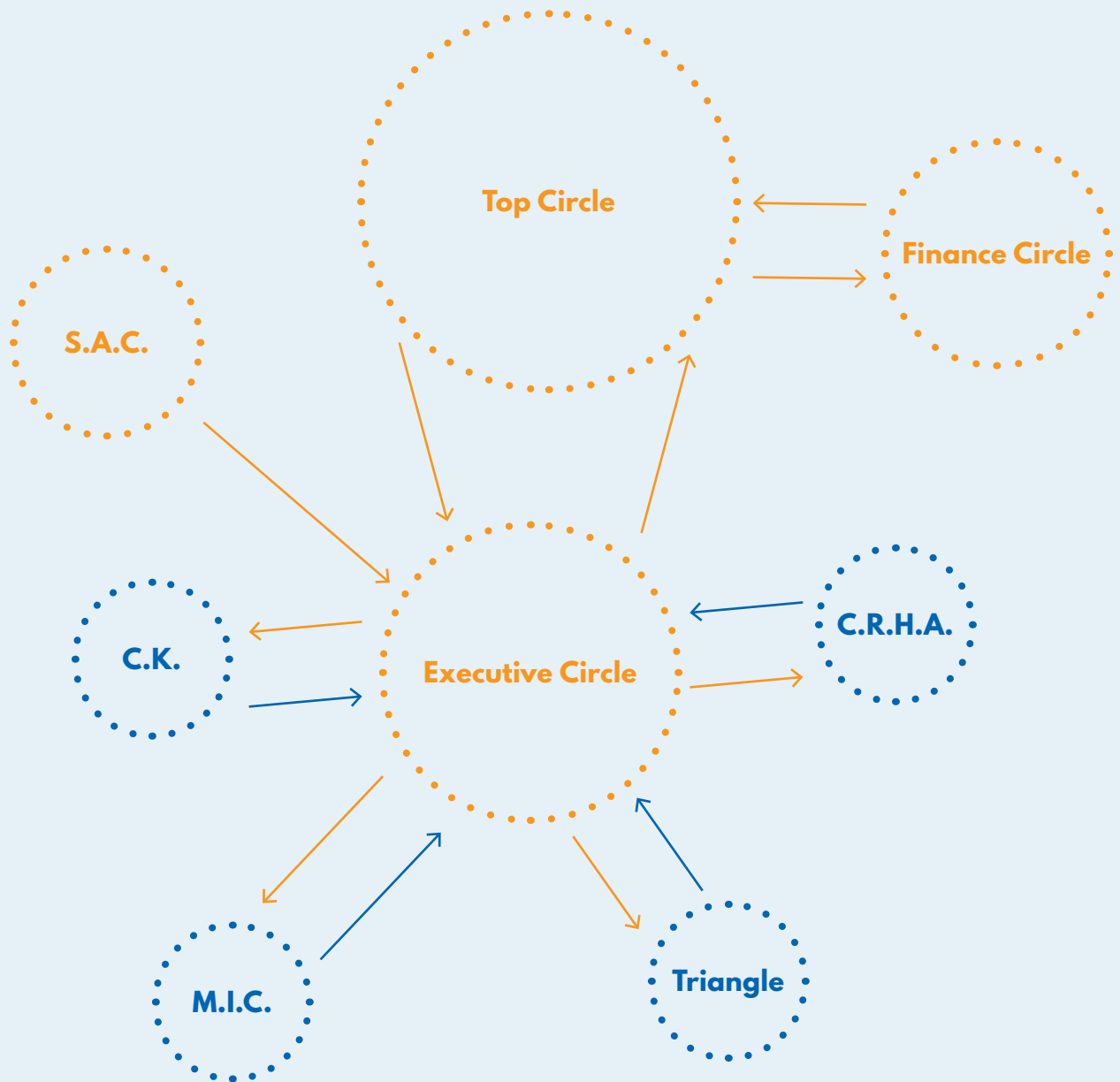
The dynamically governed (or sociocratic) organization is composed of a hierarchy of semi-autonomous project teams (“circles”). A circle exists to combine management operations and decision making in order to respond efficiently to internal and external environments.

Each circle has its own objectives (“aims”) and makes its own policy decisions by consent. It develops itself from the methodology of leading, doing, and measuring, or feedback looping. Each circle has the autonomous responsibility to execute, measure, and control its own processes in achieving its aims.

Each circle is connected to the next higher circle with a “double link,” which means that at least two people, the leader and one representative, are full members of the next higher circle. This is how intelligence flows through the entire organization, from top to bottom and across all circles. Double linking ensures accountability, transparency, and rapid information sharing across the organization.

The Top Circle supplants the traditional board of directors and includes the executive director(s). Each of these circle members participates fully in the decision-making in the Top Circle.

Other circles are created by the Management Circle to carry out different aims established by members of the Management Circle and/or the Top Circle.



KEY

S.A.C. = Social Awareness Circle // Ethics & Diversity

C.K. = Cuyama Kitchen // La Cocina Cuyama // Food Entrepreneurship

M.I.C. = Made in Cuyama // Economic Development

Triangle = Triangle Circle // Arts & Creative Engagement

C.R.H.A. = Community Research & Housing Access

Blue = Project Circles

Orange = Policy Circles

Our facility is developing to be a cornerstone of small business and local economic progress for the Cuyama Valley communities.

Our community steers the future of our valley through collaborative decision-making and ownership, becoming the vehicle of equitable investment for our existing economic sectors.

Blue Sky Center's mission is to strengthen our rural communities within the Cuyama Valley by supporting entrepreneurs and building our regional creative and economic resources by:

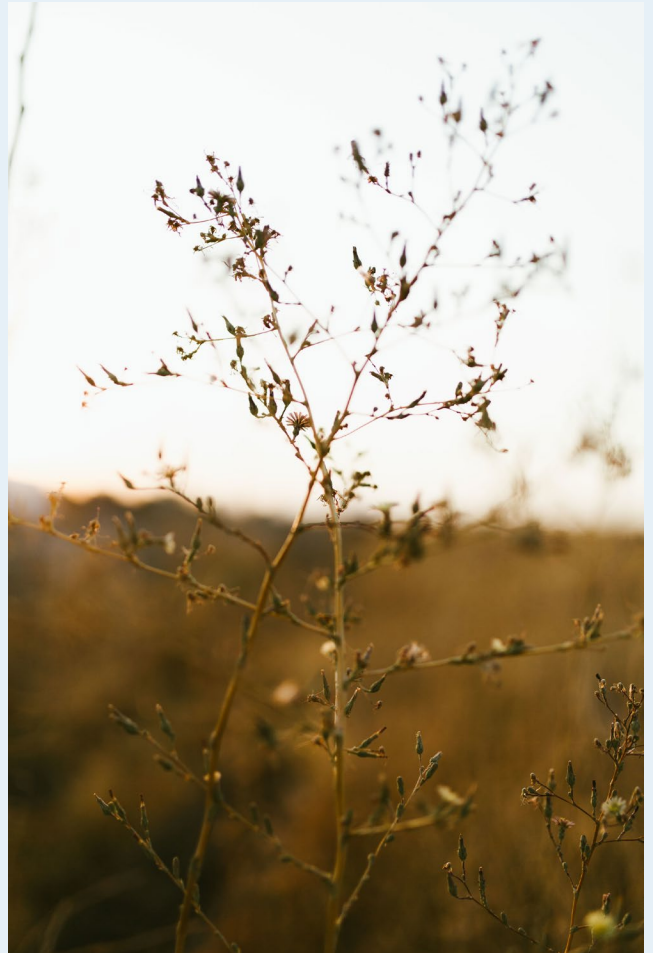
Using creative community engagement strategies to support housing and community infrastructure

Hosting rural practitioners to co-author impactful, progressive work with our community

Providing direct technical assistance to small manufacturers / enterprises

Researching food processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure

Developing space and amenities for small startups and existing businesses



Impact Goals

#1 Create a community food system

Utilizing La Cocina Cuyama as the catalyst to connect producers to buyers, and processors to distributors through community investment, network capacity building, and Cuyama Valley product branding and distribution.

#2 Cultivate community/resident ownership

Provide technical assistance, space, amenities, and support to entrepreneurs, startups, and regional businesses that contribute to the local economy and do not extract but instead reinforce solutions that support the high desert environment.

#3 Contribute to a resilient community infrastructure

By validating systems through asset-based research and documentation, contribute to housing and community infrastructure and utilize creative partnerships to ensure inclusivity in the process as well as the product.

Workplace Goals

#1 Build the human capacity of Blue Sky staff

Through professional training for organizational leadership and investing in appropriate staffing levels (while curbing programmatic objectives in order to avoid burnout).

#2 Develop inclusive administrative/operational systems and policies

Prioritize workplace policies and systems that reflect the diversity of the communities Blue Sky serves, ensures safe and supportive workplace atmosphere, and ensures staff members have a pathway and network that leads to personal and professional fulfillment.

Funding Goals

#1 Build the funding capacity of BSC

Through the BSC network, diversify funding partnerships and strengthen regional funding through focused programming and reporting that is reliable, effective, and impactful.

#2 Become a self-sufficient organization

Develop frameworks and earned revenue streams that lead to community-owned enterprises and maximizes the use of Blue Sky facilities.



OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

Staff Roles

Co-Executive Directors

Emily Johnson and Jack Forinash: In this current iteration of operational structure, Blue Sky Center uses a dual, equal executive director structure. Both are full-time, salaried positions and report to the Top Circle. Each director leads in unique ways while sharing responsibilities and cross-training, ensuring that no one director's absence stymies efficient progress of the organization.

Part-time Staff

Hospitality Manager, Melanie Shaw (hired September 2018): Part-time administrative support to oversee the hospitality operation and housekeeping staff, facilities rentals management, and provide support with Blue Sky Center events.

Other Roles for Potential Future Staff:

Facilities Manager: handles building upkeep, landscaping, equipment maintenance, staff training on equipment use, etc.

Director of Communications: handles report design, marketing, photography, social media, et cetera; could be someone who is a freelancer that works part time for us and part time out of our spaces.

2018-2019 VADs

(VISTA Assignment Descriptions)

Blue Sky Center utilizes AmeriCorps VISTA, a national service program that works to eliminate poverty, build staff capacity, experiment/test programs and projects in our community, and build collaborative engagement strategies with other Cuyama community leaders. This work has led to more effective solutions that build the bottom line of not just Blue Sky Center but other community organizations and initiatives as well. VISTA members engage across all sectors of our community. From coaching youth sports leagues to creating fundraising databases for teachers, VISTAs create streamlined pathways for our community to collaborate and grow together.

2018 - 2019 VISTA Project Goal: To ensure our rural community can grow and bloom, this VISTA project year will build capacity for the Blue Sky Center and the community to address core needs related to rural economic revitalization, civic engagement and governance, affordable housing, community planning, environmental sustainability, food systems and agriculture, and development of essential community infrastructure.

Blue Sky Partnership Criteria

PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES & CRITERIA

Any new partnership that BSC enters into or new program or project that we launch internally should address these questions, and essentially answer “yes.” New projects should be first vetted with the Co-Executive Directors with staff and then brought to Top Circle meetings for discussion.

Key Words:

Accessible, healthy, thriving, sustainable, local, diverse

Values-Driven:

Does the project management and team reflect the diversity of communities served, and do their organizational values align with ours?

Triple Bottom Line:

Can the operation showcase verifiable environmental, social, and economic impact?

Strengthening Existing Economic Sectors:

Will operation close production loops, provide access to distribution channels, or build pathways for local producers?

Education & Training:

Is there educational curriculum in place? (Train the trainer models, apprenticeships, and replicable systems)

Cuyama Valley-centric:

Does it strengthen what makes Cuyama Valley unique and abundant?

Strategic Issues to Address

Maintaining community trust

Ensuring input from community and stakeholders is inherent in our process

Documenting replicable programs: Blue Sky is still developing its “proof of concept” but needing to document and measure effectively in order to share replicable processes and systems

Rebranding the organization under economic development model and developing clear messaging

Investing in strong organizational leadership as well as appropriate staffing levels: moving from “start-up” to “maturing organization”

Defining clear and effective board roles: moving from “working board” to “governing board”

Developing organizational operating procedures and policies

Strengthening and diversifying funding capacity

