MADE IN CUYAMA
Blue Sky Center is building models for resilient, thriving, and inclusive rural economies.

"If sometimes our great artists have been the most critical of our society, it is because their sensitivity and concern for justice, which must motivate any true artist, makes them aware that our Nation falls short of its highest potential. I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist."

JOHN F. KENNEDY
There is a plethora of studies and reports highlighting and validating the power of arts and creative sectors in rural economies across the nation. It seems that the creative power of people and place is often considered less important – less valid – than traditional sectors of community and economic development. Is there a world where we can check all of the boxes of quality housing, job creation, and access to food and water, while also leading more innovative, inclusive, and resilient strategies to enact thriving rural economies? What has not commonly been discussed in the rural creative sector is how community organizers and non-profit organizations can use their existing competitive advantage to develop economic resources in their communities without reaching into an already highly competitive pot of arts funding.

A notable source of funding that brings both resources and notoriety to a project is the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEA has an annual budget of $155m (FY19), or 0.0035% of the federal budget; and just 80% of that goes out as grants. With 2,400 grants given out per year, that’s about $20,000 to each grantee in a year. State and local departments of arts and humanities are similarly structured as a small fraction of the total annual funding. And philanthropic foundations are both reducing their percentage of funding directed toward the arts and ever-more funding large, established institutions, often far from rural communities. Arts funding as a share of total foundation funding is often cited well below 10%. Let’s re-frame the “Arts.” Lowercase the “a.” Call it “economic development,” “housing research,” “transportation outreach,” or “health advocacy”? This opens up the funding opportunities to the other 90%+ of sources, from the Small Business Administration, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), federal and state departments of transportation, and Health and Human Services. Suit grant applications to these large funders, check their boxes, and then hire artists and creative professionals to do the work. Community development - especially in rural areas - is economic development, housing advocacy, water and food access, community cohesion, health, safety, and quality of life; who better to address complex, human-to-human issues than creative professionals whose job it is to elicit expression of identity, hopes, and dreams?!

Blue Sky Center has a budget of $415,179 and, for the year to date (8 months in), only 3% of income received this year has come from arts-specific funding (and even that was a single donor who personally knows one of our artists-in-residence, sent to support his specific project). Our team has consistently pushed back on implementing solutions for the case of implementing solutions that adhere to the accolades of grantors. We strongly value the nuanced realities of people and their places and develop over time the solutions that uplift the strengths of the community while diminishing the threats to the place. We hire creative professionals to co-author these solutions and lead community engagement to ensure that our programs are both diverse and inclusive throughout our community. We utilize earned revenue and economic development grants – such as those from USDA Rural Development and HUD Section 4 - to leverage creative work into stimulating entrepreneurship and community ownership.

We aim to share our case studies with other rural communities for the purpose of showcasing pathways that support holistic community development. This report outlines one initiative that centers Cuyama Valley creative professionals as the driving force for incremental and deliberate progress toward rural resiliency. We invite you to reach out to us for more details, even down to the nitty gritty; we’re happy to share grant contacts, copies of successful and unsuccessful grant applications, policies, reports, and learned truths. If it can be done in a rural community - where traditional resources are limited and political power centers are far away - then it can be done anywhere!
THE CASE STUDY OF NOÉ MONTES

Utilizing creative community engagement to support community infrastructure

Noé Montes grew up in a family of migrant farmworkers in California’s Central Valley. Over the last 25 years, he has developed a socially engaged photography practice based on creating documentary work then activating it through community programming. Noé believes that people can understand each other better by learning each other’s stories and that they can then work together to solve problems in their community. In the Cuyama Valley Noé has conducted research and interviewed and photographed residents in order to create an honest portrait of the valley: its people and the issues that are important to residents. He has also worked with our local schools to teach students photography skills and concepts and engage them about how art can create and strengthen community. Additionally, Noé has worked with local residents who are interested in photography to develop their photo skills through technical assistance and mentorship. The writing and photos that Noé, the students, and the residents create will be exhibited locally and regionally and used to continue the conversation about the Cuyama community and the future of the Cuyama Valley. With Noé’s leadership, we intend to activate his work by incorporating these current histories into the school curriculum, by producing a printed piece for local distribution for the purpose of connecting people to each other through storytelling, and by creating an online index of the work for others to source, with the intent of affecting local policy by enhancing the visibility of the human condition of the residents of the Cuyama Valley.

“Noé Montes grew up in a family of migrant farmworkers in California’s Central Valley. Over the last 25 years, he has developed a socially engaged photography practice based on creating documentary work then activating it through community programming. Noé believes that people can understand each other better by learning each other’s stories and that they can then work together to solve problems in their community. In the Cuyama Valley Noé has conducted research and interviewed and photographed residents in order to create an honest portrait of the valley: its people and the issues that are important to residents. He has also worked with our local schools to teach students photography skills and concepts and engage them about how art can create and strengthen community. Additionally, Noé has worked with local residents who are interested in photography to develop their photo skills through technical assistance and mentorship. The writing and photos that Noé, the students, and the residents create will be exhibited locally and regionally and used to continue the conversation about the Cuyama community and the future of the Cuyama Valley. With Noé’s leadership, we intend to activate his work by incorporating these current histories into the school curriculum, by producing a printed piece for local distribution for the purpose of connecting people to each other through storytelling, and by creating an online index of the work for others to source, with the intent of affecting local policy by enhancing the visibility of the human condition of the residents of the Cuyama Valley.

“Although not generally thought of as under the umbrella of economic development and therefore not often considered for those funding streams, art can be both a catalyst and a factor in economic development in rural communities. An artist can work with members of the community to teach skills people can monetize. In the case of our work in Cuyama, a couple of the people we have worked with have expressed an interest in developing a local photography business, so we have done specific skills training. We have also been able to enlist residents in creating photographic work as a part of telling the story of their community, paying them for their time and talent. In Cuyama our project has worked as community outreach to inform the residents about economic development opportunities available with Blue Sky and generally creating awareness of the fact that Blue Sky is a community resource that is available to them, especially in the Hispanic community. Additionally a project like the one we are carrying out in the Valley helps give voice the most marginalized members of the community and gathers information and data that can be used for resource allocation.”

NOÉ MONTES
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction • 4
Table of Contents • 12
Introductory Terms • 13
Creative Economic Development • 15

Made in Cuyama
RCAC: A Closer Look

Phase One: Recharge our Community Economy
Phase Two: Start, Grow, Revive Local Business

Direct Technical Assistance

Business Profiles • 27
Project Budget • 41
Looking Forward: Investing in Rural • 43

Support • 46

INTRODUCTORY TERMS

We believe that the below terms support readability of this report.
To skip to content please go straight to Made In Cuyama on page 15.

Technical Assistance: Non-financial assistance provided by local or national specialists. For the Made in Cuyama Project, technical assistance takes the form of building systems and procedures for staff retention and development; offering training and support for business owners to access certifications and permits; developing formal business infrastructure through business planning and financial management training; providing access to professional advice on increasing overall net earnings; and developing branding packages and marketing plans.

WealthWorks: A community development curriculum originally developed by the Ford Foundation and now supported as an approach to improving community livelihoods by a range of national and regional partners, including Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC). Broad goals of the WealthWorks model in relation to the Cuyama Valley include: build a more self-reliant and robust Cuyama Valley economy; bring underutilized community assets — people, place, property, and know-how — into fuller participation and production; create wealth that sticks — because it is locally owned, controlled, and reinvested; increase upward mobility for all; strengthen industry sectors that fuel the economy; and forge valued partnerships that can connect again and again to power an increasingly resilient region. (from RCAC)

Eight Forms of Wealth: Under RCAC’s leadership, Cuyama Valley community members learned and incorporated the “Eight Forms of Wealth” into their analysis of economic opportunities and barriers in the Cuyama Valley. To build a region’s wealth, WealthWorks considers not just financial assets but includes the stock of all capitals in a region. This approach takes into account all the features of a town that make it a good place to live, work, and visit. The eight forms of wealth include:

Individual: The existing stock of skills, understanding, physical health, and mental wellness in a region’s people.

Intellectual: The existing stock of knowledge, resourcefulness, creativity, and innovation in a region’s people, institutions, organizations, and sectors.

Social: The existing stock of trust, relationships, and networks in a region’s population.

Cultural: The existing stock of traditions, customs, ways of doing, and world views in a region’s population.

Natural: The existing stock of natural resources—for example, water, land, air, plants, and animals—in a region’s places.

Built: The existing stock of constructed infrastructure—for example, buildings, sewer systems, broadband, roads—in a region’s places.

Political: The existing stock of goodwill, influence, and power that people, organizations, and institutions in the region can exercise in decision-making.

Financial: The existing stock of monetary resources available in the region for investment in the region. (from RCAC)
**MADE IN CUYAMA**

In 2018 our team clarified our mission of contributing to the economic development of the Cuyama Valley by launching our “Made in Cuyama” project, an initiative to support local rural businesses and entrepreneurs. The Made in Cuyama operational strategy is to cultivate resident ownership in our Cuyama Valley communities. We aim to accomplish this by providing 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.

In August of 2018, we received a $35,000 USDA Rural Business Development Grant to apply toward technical assistance for existing and emerging business owners and job trainings for our community members in the Cuyama Valley. We’ve made great strides with our Made in Cuyama initiative by adding Rural Community Assistance Corporation to the mix as a consultant and ensuring sustainability with another award through RCAC from their HUD Rural Capacity Building Grant to assist rural economic development, a three-year contract commitment through 2022 to provide additional workshops and technical assistance to Blue Sky Center and the individual entrepreneurs. We’ve been offering direct technical assistance to twelve (12) intake applicants and have completed a six-week English as a Second Language (ESL) pilot course in partnership with Allan Hancock College and Cuyama Joint Unified School District.

**Value Chain:** RCAC uses the “value chain” process to map out the potential for new business ventures. This includes analyzing current economic conditions and creating a strategic action plan to take advantage of the most feasible opportunities. The elements of a value chain include partnerships, coordination, and defining interests. Value chains provide a working framework to respond to changing consumer markets, stimulate productive investments in underutilized resources and infrastructure, and lay out pathways for regional economic development with potential to scale sustainably. (from RCAC)

**Foodshed:** A foodshed is the geographic location that produces the food for a particular population. The term describes a region where food flows from the area that it is produced to the place where it is consumed, including the land it grows on, the route it travels, the markets it passes through, and the tables it ends up on. (foodshedalliance.org)

**Latinx:** Of, relating to, or marked by Latin American heritage — used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina. (Merriam-Webster)

**Creative Professionals:** We use this term to encompass those that identify as an artist, designer, craftsperson, cultural practitioner, or the like.

**Wayfinding:** Wayfinding is the act of self-guiding. Wayfinding is gaining an understanding of where you are relative to other things in your environment and then moving successfully and intentionally to another location. Example tools to support wayfinding include: signs, maps, icons, color systems, and other elements. (huntdesign.com)

**Cuyama Kitchen:** Owned and operated by Blue Sky Center, the Cuyama Kitchen is a fully licensed commercial kitchen available for Cuyama community use. It provides a space for food ventures, workshops, fundraisers, and private use such as event catering.

**INTRODUCTORY TERMS (Continued)**

We believe that the below terms support readability of this report. To skip to content please go straight to Made In Cuyama on page X.
RCAC: A CLOSER LOOK

RCAC believes the key to vibrant, healthy, and enduring rural communities involves aspirational planning and actively creating good jobs through a viable, catalytic project. “Building Rural Economies,” powered by the WealthWorks model, is an innovative program designed to: a) identify and carry out comprehensive community economic development activities; b) access resources to move catalytic projects forward; c) train and support local entrepreneurs; and d) make positive economic changes that produce lasting impacts on rural communities.

Phase One
Recharge Our Community Economy

Under the USDA grant, RCAC with support from the County of Santa Barbara, was hired by Blue Sky Center to carry out their Recharge Our Community Economy (ROCE) curriculum in the spring and summer of 2019. This community-wide workshop series tackled issues related to housing, economic strength, recreation, and culture. The series connected community members with local businesses and organizations committed to improving and strengthening the economic and business environment in their community. During this phase one implementation, our goal was to identify the strengths within our community and the economic potential of our valley by identifying valuable local resources and value chains.

During the workshops, community members have envisioned together the future for the Cuyama Valley, constructed a timeline dating back to the 1800s, identified different forms of local wealth outside of traditional affluence, and discussed value chains to cultivate and developed a strategic plan to implement community projects outlined through the RCAC WealthWorks model. The outcomes of this four-part workshop series identified both new economic opportunities in the community and the local champions with the passion to take advantage of those opportunities.
Our accumulative participation in RCAC-led workshops included 63 community members ranging from large and small business owners, farmers, school administrators, retirees, and community advocates. Participants were led over four months through the WealthWorks curriculum, utilizing the Value Chain and other trusted tools to guide learning objectives and leading to a participant-owned plan of action for economic development.

Through this work, economic strengths were identified in the Cuyama Valley. Utilizing RCAC’s eight forms of wealth analysis, ranked highest among the participants of the ROCE workshops were the capital sectors of: 1) natural wealth, 2) Individual wealth, and 3) social wealth. By using the WealthWorks eight capitals framework, business and community members can better identify, assess, and employ their existing wealth — their eight capitals — over time. And they can gauge how their efforts help the useful stocks of each capital either grow or diminish in the region.

Two Value Chains were developed to be integrated into a strategic plan for the Cuyama Valley communities: Tourism & Food Action in the Cuyama Valley.

As a group, community members forged alliances and directed priorities based on existing skills and resources in the room. The top priorities for the tourism value chain in our communities were:

**Wayfinding & Beautification**

Representatives from our local boutique restaurant and inn, The Cuyama Buckhorn, led the way in determining short, medium, and long term goals to attract people to stop, shop, and explore what our Cuyama Valley communities have to offer. From implementing town maps and effective and creative signage off of Highway 166 to a visitor center that is a historical marker in its own right, this group got right to work developing the partners, funding needed, and a detailed plan to implement New Cuyama and Cuyama Valley maps.

**Cuyama Swap!**

During our Spanish-language workshops, three local women took a leap forward to identify a tangible project in our community that celebrates the abundance of local craftsmanship and can be implemented right away. Starting this September, Cuyama Swap! will be an event planned by and for our community entrepreneurs to sell their goods, crafts, and products and highlight the skills abundant in our high-desert region! We will evaluate the successes and failures of our September pilot and build leadership capacity for these women entrepreneurs with the aim of Cuyama Swap becoming a regularly occurring event.

**OUTCOMES HOPE TO BE ACHIEVED**

Workshop participants were collectively asked what outcomes they would like to see from the Tourism Value Chain Analysis:

- Increased consumer spending in the Cuyama Valley.
- Increased tourism in the Cuyama Valley.
- Sustained revenue for Cuyama communities.
- Increased community pride.
- Increased involvement in workshops from community members.
The Cuyama Food Action Value Chain developed consecutively with outlined goals of connecting local producers to buyers and processors to distributors through community investment, network capacity building, and Cuyama Valley product branding and distribution. Eleven community stakeholders with a defined interest in our local food system came together to outline opportunities, partnerships, and a step-by-step pathway for a more resilient food system. Opportunities included: increasing agro-tourism, developing a community food market, increasing classes that focus on growing and preparing food, and developing a farm to demonstrate agricultural best practices and job training curriculum. In order to coordinate these activities, the group discussed a model to use, a Cuyama Food Commons.

The Food Commons (thefoodcommons.org) is a model that connects local and regional food system enterprises to a cooperative national federation that enhances their profitability and sustainability while creating and supporting a robust system of local community financing, ownership, management, and accountability.

THE FOOD COMMONS MODEL HAS THREE INTEGRAL PARTNERSHIP COMPONENTS:

The Food Commons Trust: a non-profit partner to acquire and steward critical foodshed assets.

The Food Commons Financing Arm: a community-owned financial institution that provides capital and financial services to foodshed enterprises.

The Food Commons Hub: a locally owned, cooperatively integrated business enterprise that builds and manages foodshed-based physical infrastructure and facilitates the complex logistics of aggregation and distribution at different scales among all the moving parts of the system, and provides scale economies, business services, technical assistance, and training to new small food businesses.

OUTCOMES HOPED TO BE ACHIEVED

Working members of this food action group identified the following outcomes that they would like to see through the support of the Food Action Value Chain Analysis:

- Bring The Food Commons in as a technical assistance provider to implement a model in the Cuyama Valley.
- Build leadership development pathways for our Latinx community.
- Connect with “Big Ag” producers for investment and resources.
- Gain input from our community youth.
- Define unique data on livelihood and opportunities for farm workers.
- Support the local school garden and school district initiatives.
- Identify the opportunities and barriers to establish a local grocery store or other type of food commons hub.

Since this spring, Blue Sky Center has secured $6,740 to help implement the Cuyama Healthy Foods Initiative. This project, developed from our stakeholder meetings, aims to address food advocacy in Cuyama by building relationships with our schools and increasing leadership opportunities for our Latinx community members. The Healthy Foods Initiative encompasses three main goals:

- To expand education on food and cooking in a bilingual setting.
- To support multicultural community leadership by providing tools and resources for Cuyama Valley food advocacy.
- To ensure the continued growth of the Elementary School Garden as a community asset and project.

We are still seeking additional funding to ensure the Healthy Foods Initiative has a lasting impact on the development of local champions who will carry out the food action initiatives in the future. Please reach out to Em at em@blueskycenter.org to support this integral project to create a more inclusive, diverse, and resilient food system in the Cuyama Valley.
Phase Two
Start, Grow, Revive Local Business

RCAC has created an innovative entrepreneurial workshop series called “Start, Grow, Revive” Your Business (SGR). The curriculum includes instruction on standard business and feasibility plan components including project financing, financial projections, marketing, production, and quality control. The curriculum emphasizes skills necessary to launch or expand a business and focuses on sustainable business practices and local/regional networking.

Starting this fall, RCAC will be enacting their Start, Grow, Revive program for the new and existing entrepreneurs looking to receive one-on-one technical assistance for their businesses. Because of the capacity built from this partnership, Blue Sky Center has been able to hire a Community Coordinator to carry out Blue Sky Center and RCAC activities in the arena of community economic development. The Community Coordinator will provide technical assistance, training tools, and resources to individual entrepreneurs to facilitate private sector business development. This part-time position will also be responsible for coordinating ongoing communication with individuals working in this grassroots effort to uplift the economy of the Cuyama Valley.

Community Coordinator Objectives
Outcome Goals for the Community Coordinator are as follows: a) Participate in and co-facilitate the Start, Grow, Revive Your Business (SGR) program curricula for up to 30 community members and up to 20 current and/or aspiring entrepreneurs – including identifying loans and other resources to help local entrepreneurs succeed; b) provide one-on-one and/or classroom-based technical assistance on business development, expansion, and retention techniques; d) assist with launching or expanding up to four (4) new businesses through technical assistance to current or potential entrepreneurs; e) create up to six (6) new jobs; f) assist current or potential entrepreneurs to obtain businesses loans of up to $50,000. g) enroll up to 20 current business owners and/or aspiring entrepreneurs to use RCAC’s Initiate Platform. Enrollment started during the Recharge Our Community Economy sessions and will continue throughout the Start Grow Revive workshop series. The Community Coordinator’s initial focus will be to recruit new participants and continue to provide one-on-one client-centered small business technical assistance to the businesses identified through this grant.

DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Blue Sky Center has grown its staff capacity to offer Cuyama Valley business owners direct technical assistance with:

Building capacity for staff retention and development
Receiving business certifications and permits
Developing formal business infrastructure through business planning and financial management
Increasing overall net earnings
Developing a branding package and marketing plan
SPRING 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

Number of participants engaged through the Made in Cuyama project

- Total (31, 100%)
  - Hispanic/Latinx (29, 94%)
  - Non-Hispanic or Latinx (2, 6%)
  - Male (6, 19%)
  - Female (25, 81%)

In spring 2019, twelve Cuyama Valley business owners were served through building systems and procedures for staff retention and development, offering training and support for business owners to access certifications and permits, developing formal business infrastructure through business planning and financial management training, providing access to professional advice on increasing overall net earnings, and developing branding packages and marketing plans.

These services were offered for free through the USDA Rural Business Development Grant. Outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- 2 new businesses created in New Cuyama
- 2 new catering services offered through the Cuyama Kitchen
- 4 new employees hired by Made in Cuyama local businesses (3.5 FTE positions)
- 1 new job position created at Blue Sky Center (0.34 FTE position)
- 3 unique business certifications received by local businesses

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN RECEIVING SUPPORT WITH YOUR BUSINESS OR BUSINESS IDEA?

All potential Made in Cuyama clients complete an Initial Intake Form. The form provides information to help our staff gain a sense of your business experience and the assistance areas your business will likely utilize. If you require assistance, we can schedule a one-on-one to go through the process together or put you in touch with the appropriate resources you need. Once your intake form is complete, you can schedule an intake meeting with our staff to discuss resources and opportunities that meet your needs. Please feel free to direct any questions to Em Johnson at em@blueskycenter.org or (805) 770-0926.

PROFILES OF MADE IN CUYAMA PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

Highlighted below are six of the twelve businesses served through the support of USDA Rural Business Development Grant. Other businesses support services included within this grant support include: supporting a restauranter with product development and food safety certification; a creation of a business plan and formalizing business operations for a furniture fabrication start-up; supporting a new business in New Cuyama in employee retention and hiring within our local network; creating a resource database for a business owner seeking infrastructure support; and introducing the Cuyama Kitchen to a catering start-up and providing training on financial management and food-specific certifications. One local business applicant did not stay within the program for a significant amount of time to produce outcomes relevant to this report.
Jean

“Farming is not enough. Farming has to be coupled with a market. If you don’t have a market, then you’re a good farmer but nobody wants your product. We know that’s our weak point: finding markets. But we’re very lucky to be working with Blue Sky [on new ideas with a business plan, accounting, etc.]”

JEAN, MADE IN CUYAMA PARTICIPANT

Throughout the year, our team assisted Jean with finding and applying for a grant through the Federal Western SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education) program, helped edit and consolidate business documents for submission to Cachuma Resource Conservation District and local NRCS (National Resources Conservation Service) affiliates, and implemented a database for Jean to track costs, revenue, and demand of produce sales through his Cuyama Homegrown operation. Additionally, our team assisted the Cuyama Homegrown brand with the creation of a branding package for packaged produce, jams, and honey.
Ismael

Over the course of a year, we met with Ismael to identify opportunities to formalize his welding fabrication business that he started with his father. Through the support of the USDA Rural Business Development Grant, Ismael was able to finish a General Contractors’ B License course needed to formalize his business. He is currently awaiting the date to take his final test.
Felipe

Prior to working with Blue Sky Center, Felipe had tried a catered event as well as a taco-themed pop-up. Both events had resulted in a deficit with Felipe, like many entrepreneurs, ending up paying for more than he had earned. Felipe came to Blue Sky hoping that someone could offer advice and a strategy to help his catering business make a profit. After tracking all costs from his last two events, assessing where and how he had lost money, Blue Sky staff made a simple profit and loss model for Felipe that showed how the information from his past events could be used to move future events toward profitability.

Carne Asada Taco

- Total Recipe Cost: $0.97
- Cost Per Unit: $0.97
- Yield: 1.0 servings
- Selling Quantity: 1.0
- Selling Price: $3.00
- Gross Margin: 67.8%
- Markup: 210.8%
- Food Cost Percentage: 32.2%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef, CAB chunk stew</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
<td>$0.31</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable, root onion yellow</td>
<td>0.25 oz</td>
<td>$0.01</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herb, cilantro</td>
<td>0.125 bunch</td>
<td>$0.20</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese, goat</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
<td>$0.41</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tortilla</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$0.03</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meg

Meg is a local farmer who would like to process, preserve, and sell her fruits and vegetables. Meg reached out for help in getting her products to market. The cottage food regulations are difficult to navigate and Meg sought help deciding which type would be most suited for her plans. BSC determined which type of cottage food license Meg needs (Class B), what her options for processing are (home or commercial kitchen), who she can sell to, and which products are covered with this license (no pickles unfortunately). BSC staff also assisted with costing and pricing of her recipes for retail.

### Apricot Jam

- **Total Recipe Cost:** $21.16
- **Cost Per Unit:** $2.35
- **Yield:** 9.0 cups

#### COST BREAKDOWN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apricots</td>
<td>7 lbs</td>
<td>$14.00</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemons</td>
<td>8 oz</td>
<td>$0.50</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>1.4 g</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jar w/ lid + band - 8 oz</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$6.66</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Selling Quantity:** 1.0
- **Selling Price:** $6.50
- **Gross Margin:** 63.8%
- **Markup:** 176.4%
- **Food Cost Percentage:** 36.2%

### TOTAL COST BREAKDOWN

- **Apricots:** 66.2%
- **Lemons:** 2.4%
- **Sugar:** 0.0%
- **Jar:** 31.5%
Tom

Blue Sky staff assisted Tom, a retired veteran and active forest service contractor, with creating a résumé and training on how to apply for federal business certifications and programs specific to his contractor work. This spring, Tom received both his Small Business License and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Certification, increasing Tom’s contractor revenue by upwards of 5 percent.
Cuyama Buckhorn

After taking over ownership of the Cuyama Buckhorn, the new restaurateurs wanted help assessing weak points in their business and determine best steps for remediating them. Areas that were targeted for support included front of house service standards and procedures, back of house needs (new chef and updated menu), and basic profit and loss review. To help accomplish these goals, Blue Sky staff created a document for front of house standard operating procedures and presented the information to the staff of the Buckhorn, offered guidance on menu updates, and met with the new management staff to assess needs and offer support and guidance.

A copy of the Dining Room Etiquette and Standards of Service created for the Cuyama Buckhorn can be seen here in English or in Spanish.
Partnership Development
Allan Hancock Community College

Twenty community members participated in a six-week-long English language learning course (ESL) offered through Allan Hancock College. This pilot program successfully brought our regional community college back into our community, building capacity for Allan Hancock to incorporate noncredit ESL, computer literacy, and other career development courses to Cuyama Valley residents starting as early as this Fall semester. Look out for Allan Hancock job postings for instructors online and in our local post office!

PROJECT BUDGET

Total Expenses $47,271

$31,514 from USDA Rural Business Development Grant
$5,000 from Rabobank
$10,757 from Blue Sky Center

5% on marketing and advertising the program
31% on salaries and wages for Blue Sky staff
64% on technical assistance consultant fees and travel
Blue Sky Center utilized earned revenue through our hospitality initiative, Explore Cuyama, to support matching funding required for the USDA grant along with support from Rabobank. Our own internal unrestricted sources were used because we had a surprising challenge in supporting this project from non-federal corporate sources (our primary target funder). Bank foundations are typically an eager partner for a project like this that would satisfy their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) federal regulations that require investment by banks into communities they serve. According to the FDIC, “in order to receive CRA credit, a bank’s [foundation] activities must have one of the following as its primary purpose: affordable housing, community services targeted to low- and moderate-income individuals, activities that promote economic development, and/or activities that revitalize or stabilize LMI geographies.”

The funds provided by USDA Rural Business Development Grant required a 33% match. With the $35,000 originally awarded, that meant that we sought to raise $17,500 in cash from non-federal sources. In the end, we secured one grant for $5,000 from Rabobank. We applied to five other banks for requests totalling $43,000 that were all denied. We sought feedback from each denial, but most were standard non-specific language. We believe that issues of geography played a large role; being that the Cuyama Valley is primarily in Santa Barbara County (a county with many wealthy communities on the coast), average income levels (as determined annually by HUD) only get as narrow as county level data. In the end, the Cuyama Valley is averaged and data extrapolated in a way that may very well have served to disqualify - or at best score lower - applications from this community. Additional likely reasons that served to provide lower scores on our applications may have been: the low population of the Cuyama Valley (which results in a comparatively low number of outcomes banks may be used to seeing in more populated areas), the unfamiliarity of banks with the lived experience of the Cuyama Valley (there is no financial institution – bank or credit union - of any kind in the Valley), and other data points with wide margins of error that are tied to scoring metrics within the banks’ review processes (rural communities are commonly disenfranchised due to Census data that can be low quality or even missing entirely).

FDIC quote source:

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.” 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.

In the coming years, Blue Sky Center aims to bridge investment and opportunity to our rural communities in the Cuyama Valley through job training, social enterprise incubation, and community capacity building through utilizing the celebratory tools of art and creative community engagement. We are asking for your support to ensure the next phase of work is as inspiring and successful as the first. Please consider financially supporting Made in Cuyama and be apart of redefining rural as innovative and ripe for investment.
SUPPORT MADE IN CUYAMA

SUPPORTERS
USDA Rural Business Development Grant
Rabobank

PARTNERS
Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Allan Hancock Community College
County of Santa Barbara

CONTACT
Blue Sky Center
1000 Perkins Road
PO Box 271
New Cuyama, CA 93254
blueskycenter.org

Financial disclosures found at blueskycenter.org/disclosures
Independent review found at:
guidestar.org/profile/46-1239650
EIN: 46-1239650

DONATE
As a 501(c)(3) organization, contributions to Blue Sky Center are tax-deductible. To contribute, send us a check to Blue Sky Center, PO Box 271, New Cuyama, CA 93254, or use the PayPal Giving Fund (paypal.me/blueskycenter) to contribute electronically. And, as you shop on Amazon, be sure to use Amazon Smile (it’s the same prices, but with 0.5% of your total going to Blue Sky). Search for and add “Blue Sky Center” (EIN 46-1239650) at smile.amazon.com, then bookmark it for all your future purchases!

CREDITS
Photos are courtesy:
Noé Montes (pages 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 28, 31),
RCAC (16), Laura Dart (35), Kiana Toossi (39),
Sam Ihrig (44-45), and Ryan Flanagan (41).
All other photos by Blue Sky Center.

Design by Office of Virtue
Illustrations by Garrett Gerstenberger

Printed by Eastwood Print & Copy