

Cultivating a Sustainable San Joaquin Valley

How to Build Power &
Win Systemic Change
Across Movements



November 2014

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How to read this paper

If you're not familiar with the San Joaquin Valley, we recommend that you read the whole paper. Sections II and III will give you a short background on the region.

If you're already familiar with the San Joaquin Valley, you can skip Sections II and III (pages 9 to 13).

We recommend that everyone read the:

- Introduction, to understand why now is the time to invest;
- "What is Power Building" section (Section IV) to understand our theory of change; and
- Detailed description of our power building recommendations (Section V).

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Executive Summary

"From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems and fill their own needs with dignity and strength." —Cesar E. Chavez

The San Joaquin Valley (also referred to as "SJV" and "the Valley") is recognized as the "food basket of the nation" due to its leadership and record-breaking revenues in agricultural production; meanwhile, it is also a region with poverty and pollution levels that rival the hardest hit areas in California and the nation. The cities of the SJV have the worst air quality in the U.S., its groundwater is widely contaminated and being so rapidly depleted that parts of the area are literally sinking about a foot per year, and it has some of the state's highest poverty rates.

Politically, SJV representatives have the potential to transform—or block—California's ability to pass progressive public policy. Faced with a political landscape has remained incredibly challenging over time, local communities and organizations have over 40 years of successful organizing and movement building expertise in the SJV and are now poised to escalate our political power and influence to more effectively catalyze greater change regionally and statewide. As the 2016 elections rapidly approach, Valley groups recognize the need for urgent action to build power. The time to invest in change is now.

The author organizations are committed to creating a sustainable food system, yet this paper consciously and explicitly does not focus on advocacy around a particular set of issues or policy solutions; rather, our goal is to outline the strategies and tactics that will build significant power in the SJV to produce the political shifts necessary to catalyze change across all issues.

To achieve success, the recommendations in this paper must be implemented collaboratively by organizations based in the Valley. Local organizations are the best positioned to make change since they have boots-on-the-ground and well-established relationships with community members. In addition, local organizations have a deep understanding of the context, politics and dynamics of the Valley. Most importantly, organizations based in the Valley have a vested interest in creating change.

By building grassroots leadership and implementing a sophisticated strategy to build power over the long term—as outlined in the recommendations below—shifting the entrenched and inequitable power structures in the SJV is possible, and will open the door to creating truly systemic change across many movements and issues. This is a critical moment for movement building in the San Joaquin Valley: local organizations have the necessary expertise, analysis and will to leverage current opportunities and take our strategy to the next level of coordination and success by working collaboratively for long-term systemic change. We are excited to embark on this ambitious project, and eager to partner with courageous organizations and funders who share our vision and passion for change.

The author organizations have combined their collective experience and expertise to offer the recommendations summarized on the following two pages as a long-term strategy to build power and transform the political landscape in the San Joaquin Valley.

Summary of Priority Power Building Recommendations

Recommendation	Activities	Timeline	Funding required
1. Fund ongoing work to build political power (see page 16 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General operating support for core work. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General operating support for each organization, appropriate to the size of the organization.
2. Train community organizers to build a stronger grassroots community base: Community organizer training and peer support (see pages 16–19 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training & peer support for existing community organizers. • Possibly establish an organizer training institute to expand pool of trained organizers. 	5+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years 1–2 Peer Network: \$180,000 • Years 2–3 Curriculum Development: \$330,000 • Years 4–5 Institutionalize Organizer Training Program: \$405,000
3. Advance the development of community leaders to become decision-makers (see page 20–21 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an intensive program to train community leaders and movement allies to secure/run for appointed and elected public office. 	6+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years 1–3: initial seed grant of \$1.2 million (\$400,000/year) • Years 4–6: ongoing funding for program of \$1.2 million (\$400,000/year)
4. Support building an informed, progressive voter base (see page 22–23 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build infrastructure for phone-based (and other) civic engagement projects, including technological upgrades to better share lists and legal support • Advance analysis of key strategic districts in which to focus community organizing • Conduct ongoing opinion polling 	5+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build technological infrastructure for phone banking in hub organizations: \$25,000 per organization • Database upgrades for organizations: \$15,000 initial set up, \$4000/year maintenance • Conduct 2–3 Civic Engagement Programs per year: \$150,000/year • Professional opinion polling (2–3 polls per year): \$10,000 per poll
5. Promote strategic communications capacity within and between local organizations (see page 24–25 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct communications trainings for author and other organizations, both for collaborative projects and for core programs of individual organizations • Ongoing technical infrastructure and staffing to implement strategic communications plans 	3+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1: Collaborative strategic communications project: \$300,000 for 1 year • Year 2: Core partner organizations create and integrate strategic communications plan into own organizations: \$100k/organization • Ongoing support for implementation of communications strategy: \$15,000/year per organization

Recommendation	Activities	Timeline	Funding required
6 Assist in building the institutional capacity and leadership of local advocacy organizations (see page 25–26 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational effectiveness grants • Create SJV-relevant, multilingual capacity building training curriculum • Consider establishing an SJV capacity building training institute 	4+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational effectiveness grants: \$75–100,000 per organization • Collaborative to develop San Joaquin Valley training curriculum: \$200,000/year over 2 years • Conduct trainings: \$150,000 year • Offer grants to explore and develop different business models that highlight advocacy organizations' expertise, e.g. webinars, fee-for-service trainings.
7. Support documentation of local successes (see page 26 for details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight and build profile of successful projects and campaigns won by SJV organizations 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants to organizations and collaboratives (approximately \$30,000 each) to document successful campaigns, strategies and lessons learned.

The above recommendations represent an added investment in the San Joaquin Valley of approximately \$8.5–9 million over the next six years, in addition to critical core (ideally multi-year, general operating) support for the key organizations involved, which could cost approximately \$5–6 million over six years.

Given that building power in the San Joaquin Valley is critical to shifting the politics of the region and all of California, this project is timely, politically expedient and is an investment that will reap benefits for many years to come.

I. Introduction & Opportunities: The time for change is now

The San Joaquin Valley (also referred to as “SJV” and “the Valley”) is California’s agricultural powerhouse, shipping produce all over the world and contributing billions of dollars to the state’s economy. However, despite the abundance created in the Valley, the scarcity of resource reinvestment and lack of economic benefits to local communities leaves pervasive poverty. Moreover, the unsustainable practices of conventional industrial agriculture have detrimental impacts on the natural environment, leaving the Valley with severely polluted air, water and soil. The conservatism of the Valley’s political representatives has favored industry over our residents and natural environment, slowing the progress of public policy toward a diversified and economically viable future would enhance the wellbeing of our communities. The time for change is now. We have the opportunity to build on generations of successful community organizing and movement building in the SJV. Local communities and organizations are poised to escalate our political power and influence to more effectively catalyze greater change regionally and statewide.

Why invest in the San Joaquin Valley?

With one-quarter of all table foods in the U.S. grown in the San Joaquin Valley, individuals, families, and communities across the state and the nation depend on the region to thrive and be productive. In turn, everyone benefits from investment in the Valley to ensure continued agricultural production and the health and sustainability of our water, land, air and people. Investing in the valley to achieve greater equity in the distribution of opportunities and resources will have far-reaching political effects across California. Given the momentum and capacity that local organizations have cultivated, alongside the environmental and social tipping points offering opportunities to transform California’s food and agriculture systems, the time to invest in the Valley is now.

Advancing progressive policy

From immigrant rights to safe drinking water to GMO labeling issues, building community leadership and fostering champions among decision-makers in the San Joaquin Valley has the potential to shift the way health, social, environmental and agricultural policy is made regionally and across California.

Decision-makers from the SJV have long stifled changes that would support greater social, economic and envi-

ronmental justice regionally and statewide. The “Mod Squad”—moderate Democrats, especially from the SJV—are notorious for blocking policy in Sacramento, including through their notable “leadership” in key committees within the State Legislature. With the 2016 elections rapidly approaching, there is imminent political necessity to expand the capacity of local organizations to exert political power. Achieving this requires significant investment in local organizations and communities with proven track records of success (see the recommendations in Section V of this paper for the kinds of investments that are necessary).

Momentum

Over the past decade, the number and strength of local social, economic and environmental advocacy organizations in the San Joaquin Valley have proliferated. With the scope of the problems and the geography still vast compared to the number of organizations present, Valley groups have fostered a strong and unique practice of trust and collaboration: everyone knows that we won’t be able to win on our own, we quite simply must work together in order to make progress. Investing in building the existing capacity and expertise of organizations on the ground and supporting their capacity to work together will help to address some of the most dire social, economic and environmental issues in the Valley and the state.

Transformation

Agriculture is the backbone of the San Joaquin Valley, and with game-changing drivers such as drought, climate change, our fast growing population, and land taken out of production due to soil salinity, it is clear that production practices must shift. With critical issues such as climate change and water prominent in policy discussions—and political pressure to maintain “business as usual,” to the extent possible—there needs to be significant support for local voices framing the current moment as an opportunity to build on our success and transform agriculture into a system that is sustainable and equitable.

The opportunity before us is to rethink and reinvent our current food system and the unjust economic system that supports it. Our organizations envision a SJV in which our natural environment is preserved, where farm workers are valued and fairly compensated for their work and where our communities have ample access to healthy foods. This

opportunity can manifest through economic, social and political policies and practices that support farmers and farm workers to operate sustainably; aligning systems and infrastructures to allow sustainable agriculture and food systems to thrive economically; and securing real opportunities for our diverse communities to thrive and live with dignity.

While such transformative shifts in food systems thinking and practice may seem far away, the opportunity to make such change is within reach. Consider the increasing public pressure to prohibit the marketing of unhealthy food to children; the growing demand for organic food; the budding Equitable Food Initiative and the passage of the Human Right to Water Bill: times are changing. With water scarcity only predicted to increase, and climate change mitigation legislation poised to provide substantial economic support to those willing to undertake carbon sequestration practices, we have both threats and opportunities driving us to reach real solutions.

Communities and organizations in the San Joaquin Valley must be the leaders driving necessary change

Our organizations have a vision for a healthy and sustainable San Joaquin Valley where we lift communities up with a safe environment, fulfilling and abundant jobs, secure immigration status and access to healthy foods. As we push to make these changes via a number of critical avenues, we all employ one approach as a fundamental and critical priority: we must draw upon our expertise, knowledge of the local context, and the experiences of impacted communities locally to build a movement powerful enough to challenge the systems that have brought these problems.

The author organizations and others throughout the SJV are experts at working in the region, with a deep and sophisticated understanding of the political landscape, knowledge of local issues, established relationships, and a rich history of successful campaigning. Our organizations have produced a wide range of curricula and toolkits to build the leadership capacity of local residents and engage communities in educational efforts to inform decision-makers on policies and best practices. Working collaboratively, we have passed landmark legislation in the Human Right to Water bill, won critical victories to establish basic public transportation routes for isolated communities and regulate agricultural air pollution, pushed back on toxic polluters from piling onto environmental justice communities such as West Fresno, advocated for sound land use policy changes that protect farmland while investing in existing communities, and established protection zones for pesticide use around homes and schools that county agricultural officials had threatened would never pass.



Paraiso Community Garden member Giselle Ceballos, cultivating the fruits of the labor of local residents in Tooleville, Tulare County. Credit: El Quinto Sol de América

We have established groundbreaking farm to institution projects (including a strawberry farmer who provides produce for Fresno Unified School District) and established community gardens in Greenfield, Toniville, Shafter, and Arvin—an important step in improving local food access and building cottage industries. We have connected local growers to small stores and school farm stands that have brought fresh fruits and vegetables into communities that were food deserts. We have created model programs that have been used to inform state and national program designs such as Community Transformation Grants.

As well, this paper's authors and others in the valley have worked tirelessly for the last six years to increase voter participation of new and unlikely voters, most of whom are progressive people of color, and begun to expand and transform our electorate so that policies better reflect the majority of our population. Our civic engagement efforts in the Valley have reached at least 50,000 new and occasional voters during general elections, proving time and time again that there is a significant portion of the Valley's electorate (perhaps the majority) that is very progressive on issues of immigration, taxes and investment in public education and infrastructure, among several others. As mentioned throughout this paper, these efforts must be sustained over time since we must deepen and grow relationships with communities if we are going to be successful in shaping public policy. These efforts have proven effective at increasing voter participation; we have begun to integrate these thousands of engaged voters into existing community organizing efforts (integrated voter engagement).



Community gathers to march in support of immigration reform. Credit: Hope Valdez

With issues such as food deserts, the battle over water, sprawl, fracking, and (sustainable) agriculture increasing in profile and impact, engaging in work in the SJV is an increasingly popular trend. More and more statewide and national organizations are launching campaigns and placing organizers in the SJV, collaborating with and taking the lead from local organizations to varying extents. It is essential that funders and organizations without roots in the SJV recognize our track record and invest in existing SJV organizations to lead campaigns and coordinate the engagement of external groups in order to maximize our impact as well as strengthening local leadership and capacity.

Supporting local organizations to strengthen our infrastructure, analysis, and action plans around sustainable food systems will reap significant benefits in making one of the most intensive agricultural areas in the nation more sustainable and equitable. Strengthening this collective vision and infrastructure is imminently necessary to ensure that voices from the SJV are heard in policy arenas and help shape the future of our changing state to meet significant challenges more effectively.

The author organizations are currently coordinating to identify sustainable agriculture and food system policy priorities that have the potential to catalyze systemic change over the long term. Immediate support for this project is needed to ensure that we have the capacity to invest in making the most effective and strategic action plans.

We need to build political power to win across all issues

Since the Valley is a region with deep inequalities and poverty, winning progressive policies that address the chronic disease toll caused by our broken food system, that address the environmental, public health and economic injustice caused by our agricultural practices and that address the exploitation of our residents are needed.

Yet whether we are trying to address systemic inequity in the Valley through poverty alleviation, public health, land use, pesticide use or immigrant rights campaigns, a persistent and unifying root problem is the lack of accountability to and representation of directly affected communities in our inequitable political system. To build political power in the Valley—and ultimately shift regional and state policy to become more equitable—we must foster opportunities for residents and voters to

more effectively participate in the political process. While corporations have deep pockets with which to exercise their influence, we must rely on our numbers through organized communities to exercise political power. The recommendations in this paper help us to tactically advance an effective counterweight to the status quo.

Though the author organizations are committed to addressing food system issues, this paper consciously and explicitly does not focus on advocacy around a particular set of issues or policy solutions; rather, our goal is to outline the strategies and tactics that will build significant power in the SJV to produce the political shifts necessary to catalyze change across all issues.

After over 100 years of accumulated work in communities, political strategizing, movement building and winning campaigns, **the author organizations have compiled their collective experience and expertise to offer the recommendations in this paper as a path forward for building political power in the SJV.** Investment is needed in local SJV organizations to implement the strategies and tactics outlined here. We are excited by the opportunity to replicate and expand on the successes of our partner organizations to take our work to the next level and amplify our impact on regional and statewide policy. To do this, we need support to collaborate more deeply and effectively, working together as we never have before. We are confident that this will realize unprecedented benefits, and we are inspired by the possibilities for change.

II. San Joaquin Valley Background: Poverty amidst abundance

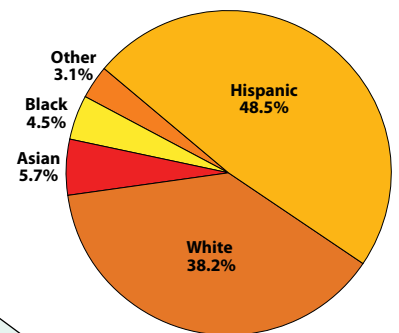
Despite close proximity to Yosemite National Park and the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains, residents of the San Joaquin Valley—the southern part of California’s expansive 450 mile long Central Valley—can usually only see the iconic nearby peaks a few days each year when the smog clears. Most rivers in the SJV no longer flow to the ocean, and the Valley floor is sinking in some places at a rate of 11 inches per year because of intensive mining of groundwater resources.¹ The “triumph” of transforming what is essentially a desert into the nation’s most economically productive and intensive industrial agricultural region has spawned a host of environmental and social justice problems that are among the most severe in the nation.

Known as the nation’s fruit and vegetable basket, many of the region’s residents ironically and tragically lack access to healthy food and fresh produce. It is estimated that of low-income adults in each county, 54% in Kern, 47% in Stanislaus, and 46% of low-income adults in Fresno County lacked consistent access to an adequate diet in 2011–12.² Those who work in and live next to agricultural fields further face serious health risks—including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and developmental disorders—from contaminated water, drifting pesticides and limited access to healthy foods.

San Joaquin Valley Demographics

Population: 3.9 million people
Land area: 24,000 square miles
Foreign born residents: 21.4% of population
Number of ethnicities: over 70
Languages spoken: 105

San Joaquin Valley Population by Race



Source: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/chhs/cvhipi/documents/cvhipi-jointcenter-sanjoaquin.pdf>

Poverty & Unemployment in the San Joaquin Valley

Population considered “poor” (income less than twice the federal poverty level): 46.2%

Households living below federal poverty level: 20.4%

Households with income less than half of federal poverty level (severe poverty): 8.4%*

Unemployment rate in Kern County (region’s lowest rate): 13.5%

Unemployment rate in Merced County (region’s highest rate): 17.2%

National Average: 7.6%**

*2009 statistics. Source: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/chhs/cvhipi/documents/cvhipi-jointcenter-sanjoaquin.pdf>

**As of December 2012, Source: <http://www.bls.gov/to9/lausjoaq.pdf>

The region's major urban centers are surrounded by highly-concentrated agricultural production and a constellation of small, often-unincorporated, agricultural communities. Poverty is of great concern throughout the region, especially in the unincorporated communities with little infrastructure.

In stark contrast to the poverty and unemployment realities, the region's agricultural industry continues to set production and income records by producing a stunning array of over 250 crops, including citrus, table grapes, dairy, tree nuts such as almonds and pistachios, stone fruits and a wide variety of vegetables. The SJV is home to five of the most productive agricultural counties in California, with a regional gross agricultural revenue of over \$28 billion. Fresno County alone set a record for gross agricultural revenue of \$6.9 billion dollars in 2011, or nearly one quarter of the region's total production. Poor land use planning and economic pressures are resulting in prime agricultural land being converted into housing developments.

This scale and intensity of agricultural production requires a vast infrastructure of partner industries—primarily shipping and transport—to carry crops away from the region to the state, national and global markets, while creating serious pollution for local residents.

In addition to agriculture, the prison industrial complex is a significant industry in the SJV. The Valley is also California's primary oil producing region, centered in Kern County.

Air, water and pesticide pollution: Serious consequences for environmental health and justice

The unprecedented level of agricultural production and related industries has come at a great cost to the environment, health, social and economic well-being of valley residents. The greatest environmental health concerns are air and water pollution, which disproportionately impact populations living in or on the edge of poverty.

In part from its unique topography and wind patterns, the SJV is home to some of the country's worst air quality. Depending on whether you are measuring ozone levels (smog), or long/short-term particle pollution, between four and six of the ten most polluted cities in the nation are in the SJV.³ This brings with it serious health risks including asthma, heart disease, and lung cancer; children bear the brunt of these effects.⁴

California leads the U.S. in pesticide use. In 2012, California applied over 185 million pounds of agricultural pesticides, accounting for approximately 20–25% of the national total. Over 90% of these pesticides are prone to

drifting away from where they're applied and onto nearby workers and community members. Each year, approximately one-third of agricultural pesticide use is capable of causing acute poisoning, cancer, birth defects, sterility, neurotoxicity, and/or damage to the developing child. With over 114 million pounds of pesticides applied in 2012, the SJV accounts for over 61% of California's total agricultural pesticide use.⁵ These pesticides are a significant source of air and water pollution.

The SJV also has the highest rates of drinking water contamination and the greatest number of public water systems with Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violations in the state. The most common contaminants found in the region's water supply are nitrates, arsenic, coliform bacteria, pesticides, disinfectant byproducts, and uranium. While these are found in water throughout the Valley, their effects are felt particularly hard by the 1.36 million Central Valley residents who live in communities that are 100% reliant on tainted groundwater.⁶ Contamination from pesticides, nitrogen fertilizers, waste from dairies and mines, among other contaminants, has been found in 97% of wells found throughout the valley. This is of great concern, as almost 90% of valley drinking water relies on groundwater as its source.⁷ Nitrate—from chemical fertilizers, unprotected storage and disposal of animal wastes, and septic systems—is the most prevalent groundwater contaminant found in the SJV, forcing some communities to close or abandon their municipal supply wells and drill deeper, only to find arsenic-contaminated aquifers. At the elevated levels found in the SJV, nitrate can cause death in infants less than 6 months old in a matter of days and the birth of stillborn babies. It has also been linked to thyroid illnesses, reproductive problems, and some cancers.⁸

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is also on the rise in the SJV. This oil extraction activity consists of high-pressure pumping approximately 40,000 different chemicals



The San Joaquin Valley is California's primary oil producing region, centered in Kern County. Fracking is on the rise, threatening local water supplies.

Credit: Brooke Anderson

(many of which are not legally required to be disclosed to the public), combined with water and sand, into underground shale formations to fracture the shale and extract the trapped oil and natural gas. The immediate threats that fracking poses to the SJV are intensive water use (each fracking job uses up to one million gallons of water) and groundwater contamination as methane and chemicals leak into neighboring groundwater supplies. Methane concentrations are found to be 17 times higher than normal in groundwater wells located near fracking operations.⁹

Disturbingly but not surprisingly, low-income communities and communities of color bear a much greater health risks from this pollution. The large population of undocumented and often monolingual Spanish or indigenous Mexican language speaking workers regularly experience pesticide and other toxic exposure, wage theft, poor access to fresh food, substandard working conditions and poor educational opportunities. Fear of deportation and local governments' lack of capacity to serve non-English speakers often means that these injustices go unreported and unresolved.

Small, rural, poor communities and communities of color are also disproportionately impacted by groundwater contamination. Residents in these communities often have wells that are shallower so are more quickly and severely contaminated. Community water systems serving larger percentages of Latinos and renters receive drinking water with higher nitrate levels, and communities with nitrate contaminated water pay on average three times the cost for water recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.^{10,11}

Children are especially at risk to pesticides and other contaminants since their brains and bodies are still developing. A recent report from the California Department of Public Health found that Latino public school students in California's 15 highest pesticide use counties were 91% more likely than white students to attend schools within ¼ mile of the highest use of the most hazardous pesticides.¹²

The California drought

As the most severe drought in California in centuries reminds us of the broad threat of climate change, industrial agriculture has continued to mine the SJV's surface and groundwater supplies to irrigate crops, stimulating a drive to drill deeper to find water. Water is being pumped out of aquifers faster than it can be replenished, causing the aquifer to collapse, removing potential space for future water storage, and impacting the Valley's infrastructure such as canals and roadways.¹³ Economically, it is estimated that the drought will cost the industry \$1.7 billion and that 410,000 acres of crop land will lay fallow. Also, with the expected loss of 14,500 jobs, there will be a significant



Due to the drought, Sandra Garcia and other residents of Poplar are forced to use their contaminated back-up well for basic water needs. Photo credit: CWC

increase in food insecurity and lack of access to basic necessities among already marginalized communities.¹⁴

Today, residents throughout the State are being asked to make changes to their daily lifestyle in order to conserve water. However, for many communities in the Central Valley, using less water is not an option. Many families are already lacking enough clean water to meet their daily cooking and sanitation needs and are being forced to adapt to a life without basic water resources. Decreased water quantity leads to decreased water quality, as contaminants concentrate in smaller amounts of water. This deepens an already critical situation: water systems are notifying users not to consume the water coming out of the taps in their homes, communities are being forced to turn on old, contaminated back-up wells, and residents are filling buckets from their neighbors' water hoses in order to have enough water for basic sanitation.

Working together

The pervasive threats of poor air quality, drinking water contamination, pesticide and other chemical use, and drought not only affect human and environmental health but also jeopardize the food system as a whole by threatening the very people and natural resources that the agriculture industry depends upon. Simply put, the current methods used to produce a significant portion of the nation's food supply are deeply unsustainable.

Facing risks from every angle, advocacy groups and communities in the SJV understand that despite the regulatory system that wants to put the various issues in silos, they are all part of a political and economic system that undermines our collective land, air and water resources and keeps people—especially low income communities and communities of color—in poverty. Ultimately, therefore, we have to join together to create systemic political and economic solutions.

III.A Short History of Social Justice Movements in the San Joaquin Valley

"The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about people."

— Cesar E. Chavez

"And the little screaming fact that sounds through all history: repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed."

— John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

Despite the riches stemming from being a provider of an astounding portion of the nation's fruit, vegetable, nut and dairy products, the San Joaquin Valley is home to significant social, economic and political inequality. The Farmworker Movement grew out of this great divide between abundance and need. The Farmworker Movement's fight for dignity, safe working conditions, and fair wages was a necessary response to the racial and class power imbalance between the grower and the worker; this imbalance has lasting impacts today both in the fields and in the communities where farmworkers live.¹⁵ Many social and environmental justice groups active in the Valley today trace their approach to organizing, civic engagement, and strategy to the origins of the Farmworker Movement and the United Farm Workers.



Mural painting by Victor Cervantes, *El Quinto Sol de América*

Birth of the Farmworker Movement

California's agricultural system has its roots in the oppressive plantation system that came from the Southern United States, and the Farmworker Movement grew out of the racial and class inequities that have plagued the Valley since large-scale agriculture established itself in the 1800s.¹⁶ Fred Ross Sr., who trained Dolores Huerta and Cesar E. Chavez on community organizing, described the typical farm operation in the Valley as a "ranch nation" where "[t]he grower is king, with absolute power, and has his own private army of people who enforce dictates (supervisor, foremen). Those who step out of line [sic] get capital punishment (fired and evicted from housing)."¹⁷ That power extended beyond the ranch itself into the community as well. In an observation that still feels relevant today, Mr. Ross described the grower as "all powerful, because he is the one who had all the money that controlled all the elections, all the politicians, and all the judges and police."¹⁸

The growers maintained power in part by attracting immigrant groups—primarily Japanese, Filipino, Arab, Mexican—as well as dust bowl Oklahoman workers to come to California. As soon as each group began to organize to improve the deplorable conditions, growers would crush their strikes and replace strikers with other groups. A violent example of this occurred during the Pixley Cotton Strike of 1933. One day, the workers were having a meeting in their union hall across the street from the police station, where 19 farm workers were being held under arrest. Suddenly, 12 growers converged outside the union hall and began firing guns into the hall. As workers ran out, the growers continued firing, killing two and wounding several others as the police and arrested farm workers watched. Even with all these witnesses, the growers were acquitted for insufficient evidence,¹⁹ as growers exercised an enormous amount of economic, social, political and legal power over whole communities in the Valley.

Key organizing lessons from the Farmworker Movement

The grower's indomitable power continued until the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of the United Farm Workers (UFW). The UFW struggle has been well chronicled in books, documentaries and even Hollywood films. Several key strategies the UFW employed remain just as necessary and effective today to redress the economic, social, health, and political disparities that remain in the Valley.²⁰

First, Cesar E. Chavez understood the need to bring workers together across racial lines. The Delano grape strikes began when Latino farmworkers joined Filipino farmworkers in a strike for higher wages. Chavez knew that if Latino farmworkers did not join the strike, instead they would be used to crush it and keep wages down. **By joining together, farmworkers would increase their collective power.**

Second, Chavez and Huerta knew that in order for the union to succeed, the **workers needed to feel ownership** of the union through dues, leadership development, and democratic decision-making. In turn this would build the strength and confidence of individuals and of the movement as a whole.

Third, UFW organizers also helped workers **beyond the fields by connecting workers to citizenship classes and registering voters to engage in the political process.** The only way to dilute the political power of the growers was to participate in the process and make workers' voices heard.

Finally, the UFW had a long-term vision to build the capacity of **farm workers to become farm owners**

through cooperatives. This idea was based on the knowledge that ownership allows individuals to build wealth, stability, become self-sufficient and exercise self-determination.

These integrated strategies of leadership development, civic engagement, and long-term vision for individual and community prosperity are bedrocks of the most influential social justice movements of modern times, and form the foundation of much of the day to day work of today's environmental and social justice advocacy groups in and outside of the Valley.

Over the past decade, the number and strength of advocacy groups in the SJV have blossomed. In addition to the author organizations, other key organizations exercising environmental and social justice leadership include—but are certainly not limited to—the Central California Environmental Justice Network, Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, San Joaquin Valley Latino Environmental Advancement Project, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc., and Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice. The Dolores Huerta Foundation and California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation are integral to the Immigrant Rights Movement. The California Prison Moratorium Project is a model organization for prison reform. Also, in the face of deep religious and political divides, ACT for Women and Girls is advancing reproductive justice. The Valley's network of advocacy organizations have considerable experience and expertise in successfully addressing the region's most pressing problems.



Farmworkers protesting outside the DiGiorgio headquarters during the Delano grape strike. In the face of an injunction limiting the number of picketers who could assemble, Cesar Chavez suggested that farmworkers gather and pray instead of picket (see the shrine in the back of a station wagon).

Credit: Jon Lewis, courtesy of www.farmworkermovement.us

IV. What is Power Building?

“Power building” is often used as a proxy term for “what we need to do to win our campaigns and advance our movements.” This can obviously be an incredibly broad category, capturing a wide range of strategies and tactics. But, at the most basic level and regardless of issue area, we need those in power to pass policies and make decisions that support our collective movement goals.

To do this, we must:

a) Build and sustain champions in decision-making roles

In the near term, building champions at different levels of decision-making throughout the San Joaquin Valley—from local water districts to state and Congressional elected officials—means influencing those already in positions of power to support our goals and hold them accountable to the communities with whom we work. Over the longer term, it means changing who the decision-makers are and ensuring that our trusted allies hold these positions themselves.

Getting progressive allies to hold appointed and elected office successfully—especially in the SJV—demands a significant amount of preparation, training and support, but the work does not end there. Holding any decision-maker accountable (even our allies) once they’re in office requires strong public pressure to alternately give them cover for something they want to do, or push them into supporting our communities and goals even when that’s at odds with the desires of other powerful interests. Also, we want to make sure that our allies have support when they assume office (perhaps by running a slate of candidates) and don’t get burned out from always being a lone dissenting voice. Developing a strong training, mentoring and ongoing support program for candidates and local decision-makers is necessary to ensure they can be effective once they are in office, remain accountable to our communities, fix the institutions and systems that they’re part of, and push for systemic change.

b) Exert significant public pressure and people power to hold decision-makers accountable

To hold trusted allies and other champions accountable to our goals and communities while they are in office, we must exert strong public pressure to create and maintain political will to make (sometimes difficult) decisions. Decision-makers have to perceive that our constituencies could affect their chances of getting (re-)appointed or elected, both by creating significant pressure around key decision-

making moments while they’re in office and by creating an informed, engaged voter base.

Exerting strong people power to build public and political will for change requires that we organize grassroots community members, build community leaders, coordinate and maintain strong collaborations among close partners, meaningfully and effectively engage a broad base of voters; mobilize cross-sector coalitions of powerful allies, and engage in sophisticated communications strategies (including developing values-based messaging with broad enough appeal to shape the dominant narrative on our issues).

c) Ensure transparent decision-making and remove barriers to public participation and voting

Community members are routinely left out of local decisions due to deals brokered in back rooms and closed doors. Still, insufficient understanding about government processes and not having ample opportunity to participate present significant barriers to engaging in public life. This is why building community members’ understanding of civic processes and helping to cultivate representative leaders is so critical.

We must also institute fair and equitable public participation policies that allow for residents to voice their interests, especially in light of the fact that language and literacy can also be barriers to participation. Likewise, given the pervasive poverty and limited transportation options, it is unrealistic to expect residents to join many meetings in person which are operated during work hours and in government centers. Partnering with advocacy organizations to help ensure outreach to and engagement of community members where they are is essential.

Make or break: We can’t win without a strong race and class analysis

Both for reasons of justice and—given the changing demographics of California—crafting a winning strategy, it’s critical that every aspect of this work is carried out with a strong race and class analysis. Two recent examples make

this abundantly clear. In 2010, California voters defeated Proposition 23, an oil company-funded attempt to gut California's climate protection law, the strongest in the nation. As Cathy Lerza points out in a funder-commissioned white paper, "For the first time, people of color led a statewide environmental campaign on their own terms, and as partners with, not subordinates to, mainstream environmental organizations." The results were clear:

It wasn't even close—**Prop 23 went down to a resounding defeat, with 61.6 percent voting no and only 38.4 percent voting yes.** But there is more to the story: Voters of color comprised 37 percent of the electorate and whites 63 percent. However, **73 percent of voters of color and 57 percent of white voters voted against the measure.** One million new voters of color came to the polls in November 2010 in California, and clearly the vast majority of them opposed Prop 23. Even had white voters supported Prop 23, this huge outpouring of motivated voters of color would have guaranteed its defeat.²¹ [bold in original text]

Further dissecting the election results, Lerza notes that both Governor Brown and Senator Boxer owe their victories to people of color (Governor Brown received just 45% of the white vote, but 64% of the people of color vote; Senator Boxer received only 42% of the white vote, and a notable 67% of the people of color vote). Lerza's insightful paper documents the kind of concerted organizing it takes by and for communities of color to ensure this result.

Especially notable for planning winning food system campaigns going forward, the demographics that most strongly supported California's Proposition 37 to label genetically engineered foods in 2012 were Latinas at 62% yes, Asians at 61% yes, Latino men at 59% yes, and African Americans at 56% yes (versus 42% support from white women and 37% from white men).²² A stronger effort to target education and organizing in communities of color could have perhaps made a difference in passing Prop 37, which ultimately failed by a small margin.

These examples are absolutely relevant for ongoing advocacy campaigns. First, decision-makers understand what support they need to maintain their positions; those who wish to stay in office will have greater incentive to support policies that appeal to their constituents. Also, these examples are powerful reminders of the emerging people of color power base in California, which tends to support many progressive issues more strongly than white people. Finally, this highlights the need to ensure continuity in organizing and engaging community members in ongoing campaigns between voting moments to ensure the most powerful impact on decision-makers.



Tulare County community leader Domitila Lemus advocates on many issues, including pesticides, water and transportation. Here, she visits with legislative staff in Sacramento on Immigrant Day 2014, linking local concerns around immigration and health care to the Capitol Credit: EQS

Other fundamentals: Organizational capacity and unifying community agenda

A successful power-building strategy demands—in addition to a strong race and class analysis and building champions among decision-makers and holding them accountable—sophisticated and solid institutional capacity and infrastructure in grassroots and more established organizations.

Though not the subject of this paper, it's important to note that we can't build power in absence of specific campaigns and goals. Our organizations and movements must develop a unifying public policy agenda around foods system and broader progressive change in the SJV to successfully mobilize a strong base. Clear goals are both an end in themselves (winning particular campaigns or successful project implementation), and a means to the end of movement building, since people and groups need to come together around particular issues to mobilize, build and exercise their power. The author organizations are coordinating over the next year to identify the most promising policy priorities that could catalyze transformational change, especially in agriculture and food systems.

The next section of this paper outlines our priority power building strategies and tactics to achieve the above goals.

V. San Joaquin Valley Power Building Strategy: Key Recommendations

In order to best collaborate and advance collective and individual campaign objectives and broader goals, the author organizations present the following priority recommendations to build significant power, address long-running inequities, and shift the political landscape in the San Joaquin Valley over the long term. Many of the recommendations below are interrelated, but for clarity's sake they are presented individually.

1. Support ongoing work in organizations & collaboratives to build political power

Many groups in the SJV—including the authors of this paper—have been working for years to build the leadership of local residents, hold decision-makers accountable and win campaigns to advance social and environmental justice. At the same time as we need to expand upon our successes (by scaling up our efforts in the strategies that we already employ as well as engaging new strategic and tactical avenues, both of which are captured in the recommendations below), we also need continued support for core programs that our organizations have built over many years. These are the building blocks our strategies depend upon.

Investing in expanding strategic programs and opportunities as outlined in the following recommendations cannot come at the expense of support for our organizations' current and ongoing core work, including community organizing, leadership building and running strong campaigns. At the most basic, support for power building strategies requires continuing to fund campaigns and organizer positions in SJV organizations. This will continue to build community leadership, build power, and help us learn lessons to become more effective. In addition to organizing, groups need support to maintain and augment their infrastructure, including technology such as videoconferencing and online organizing.

Our movement is also most effective when we collaborate across organizations: neither one single group, nor multiple groups operating independently are capable of creating the scope of change that we need. We need to continue funding and staffing collaboratives and coalitions that facilitate us working together to amplify our power. Working together in the day to day, as well as coming together for broader convenings, provide the necessary trust-building and strategic “glue” for us to grow stronger as a movement.

For both individual organizations and collaborations, the best way to ensure a strong foundation from which to embark on new strategic power and capacity-building projects is to provide ongoing funding through general support, multi-year grants. With core work covered, organizations and collaborations can more easily devote additional capacity to developing and implementing these new power building projects. This will increase the likelihood of success as these strategic projects venture into new territory, a path that requires significant oversight, attention, and ongoing evaluation.

Funding Required:

- Funding for each organization in 2–3 year, general operating support grants.

2. Train community organizers to build a stronger grassroots community base: Community organizer training and peer support

Even in this age of online organizing and social media, the foundation of vibrant and successful progressive movements is a strong base of grassroots leaders and community members; especially powerful are the voices and actions of directly-affected people.

Together, these leaders recruit new people to the movement, keep decision-makers accountable, catalyze cam-

paigns by identifying key issues that need to be fixed, “ground-truth” policy ideas and other solutions of allies and “experts,” and create political pressure and will for change. Cultivating grassroots leaders and engaged community members is the heart of a long-term power and movement building strategy: skilled, mobilized grassroots leaders continue to work for change across issues and carry movements into the future, even when funding stops.

The vital nature of vibrant grassroots movements was highlighted in a recent environmental funder report that identified reliance on top-down strategies as one of the reasons federal climate change legislation failed to pass. The report recommended supporting grassroots initiatives and building broader support prior to policy development and advocacy.²³ Grassroots campaigns in the SJV have led to many victories, including passing historic air quality legislation (the SB700 series of bills under Senator Dean Florez), critical pesticide legislation (SB391, the Pesticide Drift Emergency Response Act), a groundbreaking restorative justice victory in Fresno Unified School District and defeating Measure G in Fresno that would have privatized residential garbage collection (through combined labor and grassroots voter outreach alongside community outreach).

Generating a critical mass of grassroots leaders does not happen automatically; it requires the dedicated, long-term work of community organizers. Community organizers are highly skilled positions—perhaps the hardest jobs in social change movements—responsible for recruiting, retaining and training community leaders and navigating political landscapes to generate focused, strategic pressure to win campaigns. They are the anchors for building meaningful face-to-face relationships with community members and,

to be most effective, they also have to be sharp strategists who can recognize and mobilize all of the necessary components of winning campaigns. Ultimately, they help communities realize their potential by helping them understand and channel their political power to create change. The importance of skilled community organizers cannot be overstated: quite simply, our movements can't win without them.

To build a strong grassroots base, we must first make significant investments in training skilled community organizers. Much like other professions such as lawyers and doctors, community organizing is not a job that you can learn from books or one-week trainings. It takes years of hands-on practice under the close mentorship of skilled organizers. Currently in the SJV, there are many very talented community organizers, but since we still need many more, each individual organization currently dedicates significant staff time and financial resources necessary to train organizers in core skills. Over the next ten years, an increasing pool of trained community organizers will be critical for growing the power of progressive movements in the SJV; this will require adequate funding for organizations to hire and retain community organizers on staff, and



Members of the AGUA Coalition gather in Sacramento before testifying at a legislative meeting for safe drinking water. Credit: CWC

likely a dedicated new training program across organizations to more efficiently train cohorts of organizers.

a) The need:

- Existing community organizers need to continually build their skills, receive more advanced training and share lessons learned with organizers from other organizations.
- Over time, the Valley needs to train more organizers; local trainings will build leaders with a keen political analysis and knowledge of the SJV landscape.
- Training programs that are local and specific to the SJV are needed because:
 - Many existing programs don't have an analysis of race and class, making them less effective at training potential organizers who come from low-income communities and communities of color, nor do they train organizers to work in these communities. To build power in a "majority minority" state such as California, we need to have a trained pool of skilled organizers who come from and are comfortable with working in communities of color;
 - Many existing programs are travel-away programs held in classrooms for short periods of time (e.g. one to two weeks); instead, the SJV needs a hands-on, practical and applied training program that is firmly rooted in the context in which organizers will actually be working.
- With long distances between towns, isolation, lack of access to services, and many unincorporated communities, community organizing in rural areas is different than organizing in urban areas or labor organizing—we need to train organizers to work in the SJV context.
- Each organization conducts their community organizing slightly differently, and all stand to benefit from opportunities for dialogue and sharing about different models of organizing.
- We need to raise the profile of community organizing as a respected and skilled profession within progressive movements—countering the belief of some who think it's an easy, entry-level position—and ensure that organizers have the opportunity to advance their leadership within organizations and movements.
- We need to develop trainings and models for community organizing that are more sustainable than many existing models (in many sectors, organizers are often undervalued, overworked and underpaid—they frequently become disillusioned and burned out within a couple of years and leave the movement).



Bringing together community residents and decision makers to call for drinking water solutions during National Drinking Water Week in Seville, Tulare County, California. Credit: Bear Guerra

b) Specific vision: Create more effective, coordinated programs to train and support Community Organizers in the San Joaquin Valley

i) Create an advanced training program and peer support network for experienced community organizers (1–2 year goal)

We need to continue to develop the skills of current community organizers with ongoing training and professional development, including:

- Intensive training courses on specific skills, such as media messaging, building relationships with reporters, campaign strategy, building power over the longer term, using new media, online organizing opportunities, and resolving challenging dynamics within communities.
- Peer support: regular facilitated meetings where experienced organizers could discuss challenges and learn lessons from each other. Include discussions on self-care and long-term personal sustainability strategies.
- In-field training days: hosted by one organization, other organizers join their campaign work for a few hours or a day to support and learn from their approach (e.g. join for a day of door-knocking and outreach in a target neighborhood).

Initially, these activities could be coordinated by several organizations, responding to the needs of a cross-section of community organizing groups. Staff from participating organizations and/or consultants could act as trainers. As need grows over time, it could eventually become part of a more structured program, perhaps even run by a new organization dedicated to community organizer training (see below).

This initial step of increased collaboration and sharing of models/approaches among community organizing and base-building organizations is a necessary precursor to creating a united SJV-based training program for new organizers in the future.

ii) Create a program to train new community organizers (3–5 year goal)

Ultimately, with community organizers being the foundation of a strong movement, the goal of creating a new program or institute would be to develop a pipeline of committed, skilled leaders in the SJV who could be hired as grassroots organizers in advocacy groups or hired into other positions where skilled community outreach and an understanding of political process would be helpful (e.g. working as staff for elected officials, working for boards, commissions, and offices, and working for other non-

profits). While each organization would want to train new staff in the specifics of their organizational culture and organizing models, the idea is that potential employers could feel confident that graduates from a community organizing program would be trained in a basic, core set of skills and that they'd been tested.

Starting in the three to five year time frame, we recommend creating an organizing program/institute to train new community organizers. We recommend establishing an advisory board of experienced organizers from various organizations in the SJV who focus on community organizing and leadership building to guide program development and implementation. Whether the program would be housed in an existing or a new organization, there would need to be dedicated staff time to coordinate program development and implementation. The trainers themselves could be experienced organizers and campaigners from the SJV and other consultants, as necessary.

The structure of the training program would be determined in the future, but it could possibly last a number of months with extended placements working in organizations on real campaigns. It would likely include core organizing skills (e.g. creating and maintaining a neighborhood committee, facilitating meetings, organizing news conferences, campaign strategy), issue-based trainings (e.g. air, water, pesticide, land use, food systems issues), political orientation to the SJV (who are the decision makers, who has power in the Valley?), training in power analysis and power mapping, and a component on self-care and long-term personal sustainability strategies.

c) Implementation timeline:

- Years 1–2: Develop advanced training program and peer support network for experienced community organizers
- Years 3–5: Evaluate structure of and develop curriculum for creating a foundational training program for new organizers

d) Funding required:

- Years 1–2 Peer Network: \$180,000 (including staff time in coordinating organizations, trainings costs, travel etc.)
- Years 2–3 Curriculum Development: \$330,000 (including an author, staff time to review and to beta test the curriculum)
- Years 4–5 Institutionalize Organizer Training Program: \$405,000 (including trainers, consultants and technical support)

3. Develop community leaders to become decision-makers

The San Joaquin Valley needs a comprehensive and intensive training program to prepare Valley residents (grassroots activists and other progressives) to run for and succeed in appointed positions on public boards, commissions and offices. In order to have more representative government for the Valley, we need more ethnically and politically diverse candidates. In the June 2014 primary election, Congressman Kevin McCarthy and State Senator Jean Fuller ran unopposed on the ballot. This lack of diversity means that only a small segment of the population is represented. It also shifts the political dialogue to the right for all valley legislators regardless of political party. In addition, because conservative politicians do not have challengers, campaign funds can be sent to other conservative candidates in more contentious races elsewhere in the state and country. Groups that have been politically marginalized like Latino farm workers remain underrepresented as politicians seek to maintain the inequitable status quo.

a) The need:

- In addition to putting pressure on existing decision-makers to support our issues, we need to make sure that we are grooming leaders from our movement to become decision makers themselves.
- A candidate training program would create an ongoing pipeline of candidates interested and trained in seeking office.
- To ensure accountability after they're appointed, we need a having strong grassroots base keep political pressure on, and the training program would establish a peer network of decision-makers to hold each other accountable.
- Not only is there a shortage of these programs across the state, but there are currently no public, formalized, Valley-wide candidate development programs that are specific to the regional context and that target specific positions that we need to win to make progressive change in the SJV. Also, existing programs are generally out of reach for our constituents because they presuppose that you have had a formal education, mastery of the English language, childcare, access to money to pay for the program and related events, and intimate knowledge of the legislative system. If you are a Spanish-speaking leader who wants to be on a local water board, existing training programs do not offer any effective support.
- We need to build the capacity of residents serving on boards such as local water districts, Community Services Districts, Planning Commissions, and other advisory boards that direct public dollars to support housing and infrastructure programs. Often community members serving on boards are not able to provide the effective oversight because the complex and technical nature of the policy issues make them



Community for a Better Arvin President Sal Partida speaks at a rally and news conference for clean air outside of the Kern Agricultural Pavilion. Credit: CPR

overly reliant on the lawyers, engineers, and technical experts who advise them. Many of these “experts” have undisclosed conflicts of interest and often provide advice that does not address the needs of the communities. These board members do not have the training or support to feel confident asking questions or pushing to obtain neutral information. A training program is needed that allows board members to build their own capacity to make effective decisions for the benefit of their community as a whole and exercise independent decision-making. There is a particular need to provide more focused and in-depth water and land use-related training to allow local people to feel able to substantively engage in what can be an intimidating technical arena, although much of the curriculum regarding good governance can be common to local boards across a variety of subject areas.

- Community-driven projects that address disadvantaged community needs are often not developed because leadership in local boards do not prioritize those needs and/or do not approach solution development from a community-driven approach. Work is needed with local leadership to develop more leaders that prioritize the needs of disadvantaged communities and can put community-driven practices into place.
- An effective leadership development program is vital to creating a pipeline of local leaders rooted in underserved communities and knowledgeable on water, who can ultimately move up to regional, state and even federal offices.
- Water agencies are some of the most powerful local governmental entities, so changing the priorities and representation within these districts will ultimately change the priorities and focus of power and resources in the valley to be accountable to underserved communities.

b) Specific vision:

Create an intensive training program based on the best practices of existing models (e.g. Emerge California—for Democratic Women, Western Organization of Resource Councils, Urban Habitat’s former candidate development program), including creating SJV leadership cohorts designed to train and support people on particular decision-making bodies such as water boards, school boards and/or planning commissions. Recruit expertise from across the SJV to provide trainings for candidates. Trainings would include:

- How to run for elected office and secure appointed positions;
- Specific skill sets for operating in public positions (e.g. reviewing budgets, how to ask for financial documents, understanding bylaws, laws that govern specific boards), dynamics of managing constituencies, and working with the media;
- San Joaquin Valley issue-specific trainings (e.g. air, water, pesticides, fracking, climate change, intro to agriculture, land use).
- Analysis of power and political orientation to the San Joaquin Valley (understanding power, who are decision makers, who has power in the SJV).

We would also establish and maintain an ongoing cohort network including occasional in-person meetings for program graduates to keep in touch. This is especially important and useful for those who succeed in taking office. The cohort network would not only provide technical assistance to those in office, but could also serve as a mechanism of accountability among peers holding office (having peer decision-makers give feedback about a bad vote behind closed doors is an important avenue for accountability in addition to public pressure/shaming). Sessions would be partly facilitated by those who’ve held public office to provide relevant expertise.

Several organizations within the collaborative have started internal conversations about creating such programs, and there is strong desire to coordinate efforts across our organizations.

c) Implementation timeline

- 1–3 years to research best practices, develop curriculum and launch programs in a coordinated and synchronized way across organizations.
- 4–5 years for graduates to take office and start to realize benefits of programs

d) Funding required:

Funding for each board-specific cohort (e.g. school board or water board) would cost approximately \$100,000 per year. Fund general training for the entire pool of candidates plus three board-specific cohorts would require a three-year initial seed grant of \$1,200,000 (\$400,000/year); plus commitment to three years of ongoing funding for program (\$400,000/year for three years) for a total of \$2.4 million.

4. Build an informed, progressive voter base

In order to pass ballot propositions related to our policy goals and ensure strong public pressure to hold decision-makers accountable, we need to build a reliable base of progressive, regular voters by implementing effective, ongoing and broad civic engagement programs.

In addition to “tried and true” civic engagement tactics such as canvassing, town hall meetings and community organizing, current technology is making it easier than ever to conduct efficient and effective phone banking and social media campaigns to generate broad support for issues. For example, in one office, an organization can set up two dozen laptops with earphones and predictive-dialing software, allowing a team of (usually short-term) staff to talk with many thousands of voters in a short (e.g. five or ten day) period. Some of the benefits of the new technology include the ability for the caller to patch the voter directly through to a decision-maker’s office and even stay on the phone to translate if necessary, making such constituent calls more accessible to voters who don’t speak English. During these calls, we can also ask polling questions to identify a base of voters who are progressive and support particular issues. Results of each call are captured in a database, making for strong lists of progressive voters that organizations can follow up with in person. Each organization’s list of community members that they interact with in person can also be shared and integrated into phone-banking campaigns; building trust and technological infrastructure to support this sharing of lists between phone-banking campaigns and grassroots organizing campaigns is critical to building a broader, informed and progressive voter base.

a) The need:

- With the 2016 election fast approaching, there is urgency to build our infrastructure and capacity to share lists and engage in more effective, higher impact, coordinated civic engagement work.
- Identify new and occasional voters who are progressive on our issues, and identify issues of most concern to them (environmental justice, economy, jobs, immigration);
- Currently, many eligible voters (especially in low income communities and communities of color) who would support our issues do not vote—securing their votes is a critical part of a power-shift strategy;
- Conducting sophisticated opinion polling is essential to understanding what issues and framings appeal to our target audiences in order to craft winning messages and policy solutions;

- Having strong phone banking operations and an informed, engaged electorate is necessary to pass strong policy and hold decision-makers accountable;
- Increased political pressure and numbers of supporters generated through a phone banking campaign can be the critical push that leverages the power built through a grassroots organizing campaign and locks-in a victory;
- Engaging in coordinated phone-bank based civic engagement campaigns is another way for organizations to better amplify our power building activities: we need to leverage during voting moments the power we’ve built during ongoing grassroots organizing campaigns and vice-versa by integrating lists of interested voters and lists generated by on-the-ground organizing. Utilizing available technology to create synergy between ongoing campaigning and electoral moments will make us stronger and more coordinated over the long term.
- Once informed on issues, we also need to ensure that people can exercise their right to vote by working on voter rights issues and GOTV campaigns, including training people as poll workers, giving voters correct information about polling places and rules, and clarifying voting rights for the formerly incarcerated, among others

b) Specific vision:

- Build SJV infrastructure and capacity to engage in long term civic engagement efforts by investing in phone banking infrastructure and technology in hub organizations. Hub organizations will coordinate with other organizations to complement their grassroots organizing campaigns with phone-banking. Start with one hub organization in first year, and identify one to two others over next three years;
- Organizations will develop an analysis of key districts that are most strategic to focus community organizing campaigns and broader civic engagement programs to best leverage change;
- Fund base-building organizations to:
 - Implement a long term voter engagement strategy to deploy phone-banking programs as a key tactic in grassroots campaigns.
 - Individual organizations running grassroots campaigns need resources to add phone banking as a strategic tactic that can help secure campaign victories. As a ballpark, a 10-day program to contact 8000 voters can cost about \$45,000 (costs

include procuring voter lists, hiring and managing a team of people to conduct phone banking, and technology hardware and software investment).

- Conduct other civic engagement programs including in-person canvassing, town hall meetings (in person and over the radio), “tele-town hall” meetings (via phone or videoconference), and “Robo-calls” (a cheap way to reach out to many constituents with pre-recorded messages over the phone).
- Fund technological upgrades in base-building organizations to ensure ease of information flow between grassroots organizing campaigns and phone-based civic engagement work.
 - To best build power, base building organizations need to be able to track their leaders in a database and easily share lists with phone-bank organizations’ lists of voters. Technological upgrades are necessary to make sure that information can flow both ways: lists of grassroots leaders can be shared with phone banking organizations for phone outreach, and lists of identified progressive voters can be shared with community organizing organizations for in-person outreach. Regular and efficient list sharing and follow up will make our movements stronger over the long term. In addition to technological upgrades, a high degree of trust is necessary to ensure that organizations feel comfortable sharing their lists—another reason that funding ongoing collaboration between groups is critical.
 - These technological upgrades may also allow organizations to take advantage of and integrate new outreach tools into their ongoing campaigns, such as sending mass texts, automatic Facebook and Twitter posts, etc.
- Fund ongoing, sophisticated opinion polling to inform more strategic campaign implementation, including the development of winning messages.
- Invest in legal support for organizations conducting civic engagement work to ensure that all relevant laws are being followed including, for example, 501(c)3 rules and reporting requirements.

c) Implementation timeline

- 1 year:
 - Identify one initial phone-banking hub organization and upgrade technological infrastructure (laptops, predictive dialing software etc.)
 - Organizations agree on databases and upgrade technological infrastructure to be compatible



After over 170 people in her town of Earlimart, Tulare County were poisoned one night by pesticides in 1999, Teresa DeAnda became a strong community leader and a voice for pesticide-affected people in the media and with decisionmakers. Credit: CPR

- Start implementing coordinated civic engagement campaigns (including grassroots and phone-based organizing).
- 2–5 years:
 - Refine strategies for integrating civic engagement and grassroots campaigns, share lessons learned
 - Identify and build capacity of additional hub organizations in the San Joaquin Valley to conduct phone banking work.

d) Funding required

- Build technological infrastructure (computers and software) for phone banking in hub organizations: \$25,000 per organization
- Database upgrades (migration and ongoing maintenance) for organizations: \$15,000 initial set up, \$4000/year maintenance
- Conduct two to three Civic Engagement Programs per year (including phone banking, canvassing etc.): \$150,000/year
- Professional opinion polling (2–3 polls per year): \$10,000 per poll (depending on the size of the voter sample)

5. Support strategic communications capacity within and between local organizations

A solid, coordinated communications strategy with effective messaging is a cornerstone to successfully mobilize constituents, appealing to decision makers, and generating enough broad public will to win campaigns.

a) The need:

- Strategic communications training and capacity building will boost efficacy of messaging and help win campaign victories: we need strong, simple messaging on what our movements and campaigns are about, and why they mean for improving life in the SJV;
- Effective use of the media is necessary to both build and support decision-makers who are champions, as well as keep them accountable;
- The SJV is an extremely conservative area: we need to tell stories that have broad appeal and find a way to promote commonly-held values in our campaigns;
- To unify and move all of our issues forward, we need to identify broader messages that incorporate all of our issues and incorporate those into our existing campaigns;
- Integrated, sophisticated communications strategies will help organizations build power and broaden our

base of support (core movement organizations in the Valley are at very different stages of incorporating strategic messaging, social media and other tools into their work).

b) Specific vision:

- Improve organizations' capacity to develop strategic messages: A core collaboration of SJV groups will hire a consultant to and get trained on tools of narrative analysis to build a common language and vocabulary around strategic communications. Include training for key partner groups and grassroots leaders in the SJV on why messaging is important and how to do it well. Work with consultants to conduct an analysis of how best to use new communications tools for our current and ideal future bases of support;
- Individual organizations hire consultants to help conduct strategic communications audits and improvements, including needs assessment, revising campaign messaging, technological upgrades and maintenance, and ongoing additional staffing within organizations to continue to implement new communications strategies.



Community Advocates at Hunger Action Day, State Capitol, Sacramento, California. Credit: FMM

c) Implementation timeline

- First year: Collaborative of author organizations hires and works with consultant to get trained in narrative analysis and message development; create unifying messages across campaigns.
- Second year: Each organization conducts communications audit and creates a strategic communications plan for own organization
- Third year and later: Ongoing implementation of communications strategies.

d) Funding required

- Collaborative strategic communications project: \$300,000 for one year
- Core partner organizations create and integrate strategic communications plan into own organizations: \$100,000/organization
- Ongoing support for implementation of communications strategy: \$15,000/year per organization

6. Strengthen the institutional capacity and leadership of local advocacy organizations

Build capacity to provide multi-lingual, multi-cultural organizational development and leadership support for staff of emerging grassroots and more established organizations.

a) The need:

- Most existing and established organizations that provide organizational development and leadership training courses are not located in the SJV, do not offer services in Spanish or other languages and are not appropriate for the specific needs of small, rural organizations that are all volunteer and/or trying to transition from being all-volunteer groups to having some staff.
- Many of the base-building organizations in the SJV focus on creating neighborhood committees, often with a movement-building vision of having those groups become established enough to continue to operate independently of the organizations that helped build them. However, providing the technical support for organizational development to all of these small organizations as they start to build their own capacity is not the expertise of—and can be too overwhelming given the existing capacity of—the base-building organizations. Having said that, existing base building organizations in the SJV have lots to offer their peers and grassroots groups, and first priority for investment should be offered to local SJV groups who may want to conduct these trainings, but just need more resources to do so.
- We need dedicated expertise to support organizational development and staff leadership building in SJV nonprofit organizations of all sizes (including training for executive directors, development staff, communications staff, administration staff).

- Small and larger advocacy organizations in the SJV need organizational development support including funding for becoming 501(c)3's (a difficult leap, but an important part of the sustainability and stability of organizations), access to legal counsel, and access to accounting support.
- In addition to short, several hour or several day training programs, ongoing peer support cohort programs are necessary to allow staff leaders to better integrate lessons into their personal work and the culture of their organizations.

b) Specific vision:

Increase resources available for organizational development in the San Joaquin Valley, specifically:

- Fund Organizational Effectiveness and Capacity -Building Grants for organizations of different sizes in the San Joaquin Valley.
- First priority is to invest in local organizations' paid time to develop and conduct these capacity building activities with each other, possibly in partnership with existing capacity-building organizations (such as Compasspoint, Rockwood, and the Leadership Challenge). Local organizations alone or working in collaboration with capacity-building organizations can develop multi-lingual curricula/trainings that are appropriate for SJV communities, including:
 - Being an executive director of a small, volunteer organization
 - Financial management
 - Grant writing and seeking
 - Grassroots fundraising

- Board development
- Leadership development for managers
- Becoming a 501(c)3
- Fund multi-lingual trainings in the SJV on priority topics, in the process training new SJV-based trainers to increase local capacity to run trainings (costs would need to cover the costs for local organizations, Compasspoint, and/or Rockwood to provide lead trainers, as well as cover participants' attendance costs).
- Fund an ongoing cohort convening of executive directors for peer support.
- Ensure funding for language access for the non-English speaking communities that our groups serve, including training to build the capacity of SJV-based interpreters and translators to provide services in Spanish, Hmong, Indigenous Mexican and other languages as necessary.
- Over the longer term, consider creating a new SJV-based organization to provide necessary organizational capacity building support.

c) Implementation timeline

- Years 1–2: Training organizations and SJV organizations work together to prioritize and tailor a multilingual training curriculum
- Years 2–5: identify appropriate (multilingual, multi-cultural) trainers and conduct trainings in the SJV
- Year 4: Evaluate the possibility/need of creating a regional office or new organization in the SJV to provide this training capacity.

d) Funding required

- Organizational effectiveness grants: \$75–100,000 per organization
- Collaborative to develop SJV training curriculum: \$200,000/year over two years
- Conduct trainings: \$150,000 year
- Offer grants to explore and develop different business models that highlight advocacy organizations' expertise, e.g. webinars, fee-for-service trainings.

7. Document local successes

Finally, raising the capacity of organizations in the San Joaquin Valley requires building a higher profile of their work by documenting successful campaigns and projects. SJV groups have significant expertise and a rich history of victories. Providing support for SJV organizations to document and promote case studies of their own successful work—instead of having organizations outside the Valley profile SJV projects—will highlight their experience and expertise, and raise the profile of SJV organizations as

powerful change-agents among other social change organizations and funders both statewide and nationally.

Funding Required:

- Grants to San Joaquin Valley organizations and collaboratives (approximately \$30,000 each) to document successful campaigns, strategies and lessons learned.

VI. Conclusion

From climate change to immigration policy, the obstacles to realizing social and environmental justice faced by San Joaquin Valley communities are certainly as challenging as they have ever been. Despite these challenges, movements in the Valley have a rich history, strong dedication and significant experience in winning progressive victories, sometimes against all odds.

By building grassroots power and implementing a sophisticated strategy to build power over the long term (as outlined in the above recommendations), shifting the entrenched and inequitable power structures in the San Joaquin Valley is possible and will open the door to creating truly systemic change across many movements

and issues. Indeed, an intentional, coordinated, long-term approach to power building is the only thing that can ensure that we are able to move beyond incremental reforms that fail to address root causes of inequities.

Organizations in the San Joaquin Valley are at a critical moment: we have the necessary expertise, analysis, proven track record and will to leverage current opportunities and take our strategy to the next level of coordination and success by working collaboratively for long-term systemic change. We are excited to embark on this ambitious project, and eager to partner with courageous organizations and funders who share our vision and passion for change.

**If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.**

— Jesus Quevedo from Cutler, California
(translated from Spanish)



In November 2013 in Sierra Nevada foothills of Tulare County, the author organizations held our first retreat to develop our vision for a sustainable San Joaquin Valley.

Appendix: Author Organizations

Californians for Pesticide Reform

www.PesticideReform.org

Contact: Tracey Brieger, Co-Director
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CPR is a statewide coalition founded in 1996 to protect public health, preserve environmental quality and advance a sustainable and just agricultural system by building a diverse movement to change state and local pesticide policy and practice. Deeply rooted in an environmental health and justice approach, CPR has been active in the San Joaquin Valley since 1999 fielding community organizers in farmworker and urban communities. SJV based victories include passing pesticide protection/buffer zones around schools, homes and labor camps in four SJV counties, establishing the community-friendly violation response projects Kern Environmental Enforcement Network and Fresno Environmental Reporting Network, and winning groundbreaking legislation SB391: The Pesticide Drift Emergency Response Act. Four of this paper's author organizations (Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, Communities for a New California Education Fund, Fresno Metro Ministry, and El Quinto Sol de América) are on the CPR Steering Committee, driving the work of the coalition with a strong Valley focus.

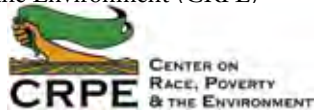


Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment

www.crpe-ej.org

Contact: Caroline Farrell, Executive Director
cfarrell@crpe-ej.org, 661-720-9140 ext. 302

The Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment (CRPE) 501(c)(3) nonprofit environmental justice organization, created to provide opportunities for rural grassroots groups to challenge and eliminate the disproportionate burden of pollution borne by poor people and people of color. CRPE was founded in 1989 to fill a gap between campaigns for social change and environmental advocacy. Our mission is to achieve environmental justice and healthy sustainable communities through collective action and the law. We have three ambitions with our work: to build the individual capacity of community residents; to foster community-power vis-à-vis decision-makers; and to address environmental issues facing the communities with whom we work. Using this approach we have provided legal and technical assistance to over 20 groups on issues ranging from dairy pollution to pesticide exposure to hazardous waste permitting to water contamination and treatment to long term land use planning.



Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program

www.ccropp.org

Contact: Genoveva Islas, MPH, Program Director
genoveva@ccropp.org, (559) 498-0870 ext. 101

CCROPP was established in 2005 as a regional partnership between community-based organization, public health departments and grassroots community residents. CCROPP is dedicated to creating healthier communities in California's San Joaquin Valley through policy, system and environmental change strategies that increase access to healthy foods/beverages and physical activity opportunities in disadvantaged communities. In 2012, CCROPP developed "Powerful People: Building Leadership for Healthy Communities" a curriculum used to train residents to be advocates for healthy changes in their communities.



Communities for a New California Education Fund

www.anewcalifornia.org

Contact: Pablo Rodriguez, Executive Director
pablo@cncedfund.org, (510) 862-7371

CNC Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization committed to achieving environmental, economic, and socially just public policy for working class families in the rural areas of California. Founded in February 2011, CNCEF provides public education on policy issues relevant to rural areas of California including health, immigration, environmental justice, workers rights, civil and human rights. CNCEF currently implements grassroots organizing, and public policy education programs in the cities of Fresno, Coachella, Merced and Sacramento.



Community Water Center

www.communitywatercenter.org

Contact: Susana De Anda, Co-Executive Director
susana.deanda@communitywatercenter.org, (559) 733-0219 (Visalia office) and
Laurel Firestone, Co-Executive Director,
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The Community Water Center acts as a catalyst for community-driven water solutions through organizing, education, and advocacy in California's San Joaquin Valley. The Community Water Center was founded in 2006 to develop and support community-driven solutions to address the ongoing drinking

water problems of California's Central Valley communities. In 2004, Laurel Firestone, an attorney, received an Equal Justice Works Fellowship to start the Rural Poverty Water Project at the Delano office of the Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment (CRPE). At CRPE, Firestone teamed up with community organizer Susana De Anda.

Together, they successfully helped many individual communities, including Ducor, Tooleville, Tonyville, and Cutler-Orosi, obtain safe, clean, and affordable drinking water. Firestone and De Anda worked to empower residents to force their water boards to clean up residential water that was black and smelled of sewage, secure funding to drill new wells, issue compliance orders requiring water providers to deliver potable water to residents year-round, force the rescission of unconstitutional ordinances that discriminated against extended families, and push for language-access policies to allow Spanish-speaking residents to effectively participate in board meetings.

Over time it became clear that the problems faced by these communities belonged to a landscape of unsafe and unjust water conditions that extends throughout the Central Valley. Due to the scale and complexity of this situation, there was a critical need for an organization dedicated full-time to working with disadvantaged communities on their water challenges. In September 2006, the Rural Poverty Water Project spun off from CRPE and became the Community Water Center, an independent non-profit entity.

Today, the Community Water Center continues to work towards realizing the Human Right to Water for all Central Valley communities through education, organizing, and advocacy. Please See Our Work for more information on our programs. Our main office is located at the heart of South San Joaquin Valley in Visalia in Tulare County, and in 2012 we opened a second office in Sacramento in order to bring our advocacy to the statewide level.

El Quinto Sol de América

www.elquintosoldeamerica.org

Contact: Isabel Arrollo, Program Manager
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Based in Lindsay, a small city of approximately 10,000 people located in the Tulare County foothills, EQS is a grassroots organization, established in 2003, that works in Lindsay and neighboring unincorporated communities, such as Tooleville, Plainview and Tonyville. The majority of the residents in these communities are low-income farm workers, predominantly monolingual Spanish speakers. These communities are for the most part isolated and removed from the policies and decisions that directly impact their quality of life. They are not involved in local and regional policy processes that affect their ability to secure clean drinking water, be protected from airborne pesticides, or influence any other type of infrastructure decisions. EQS exists to build the capacity of farm worker communities to engage in policy-making and to create opportunities for them to do so.



Fresno Metro Ministry

www.fresnometmin.org

Contact: Sarah Sharpe, Director of Programs
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Founded in 1970, Fresno Metro Ministry is multi-cultural, multi-faith community benefit organization

whose mission/vision is learning, connecting and engaging to achieve healthy people and healthy places. With a 44-year history of advocacy and community action on social, economic and environmental justice, we work together with residents in Fresno and throughout the San Joaquin Valley to advocate for community and institutional systems and policies that will improve health outcomes in our community. We also connect residents with necessary resources and opportunities to improve their own lives through community gardens, leadership and advocacy groups, and information sharing tools such as our Making Connections Community Resource Guide. We are currently building a Healthy People, Healthy Places Network to support our 3 major program areas: Community Food Systems, Complete Healthy Communities, and Cross-Sector Leadership. We are leading efforts to bring the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach into the community benefit work in the SJV.



Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability

www.leadershipcounsel.org

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Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability is based in the agriculturally rich San Joaquin and East Coachella Valleys. We work

alongside the most impacted communities to advocate for sound policy and eradicate injustice to secure equal access to opportunity regardless of wealth, race, income, and place. Our experience in rural California has taught us that as long as the most vulnerable populations remain silent and sidelined, environmental degradation will continue, infrastructure will crumble, and the most basic of services and amenities will remain beyond the reach for those in need. And, municipal, regional and state wide policies will continue to further disadvantage low income communities.

Through community organizing, research, legal and policy advocacy we impact land use and transportation planning, shift public investment priorities, guide environmental policy, and promote the provision of basic infrastructure and services. In collaboration with local and statewide advocates, Leadership Counsel, will reverse trends that have reigned throughout our history and confront the inequality and deficiencies that continue to plague the state.



Notes

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San Joaquin Valley activists on an agricultural tour of Central Coast farms. Pictured here at Swanton Berry Farm with Jim Cochran in March 2013. Photo credit: CPR.

