

Capacity Building and Community Engagement Grant Program April 2026 Final Report

Executive Summary

The Capacity Building and Community Engagement (CBCE) grant program was designed to strengthen local organizations' ability to serve vulnerable communities across California. Administered by the League of California Community Foundations (LCCF) in partnership with the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC), the program's goals included:

- **Technical:** Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) gain knowledge of OCPSC resources, state campaigns (e.g., CalKIDS), and how to access future public funding.
- **Operational:** Community foundations support trusted messenger organizations in improving communications and engaging with relevant statewide information.
- **Systemic:** Relationships are built between CBOs and their local foundations, creating a stronger ecosystem of support for future state engagement.
- **Adaptive:** Trusted messengers develop tools and strategies that allow them to pivot and respond to new state priorities in a timely and culturally relevant way.

Through the CBCE program, LCCF provided \$680,000 to 15 community foundations, which in turn funded 56 trusted messenger organizations with capacity-building grants to strengthen their ability to address pressing needs in their communities. These organizations built their own capacity while delivering essential services across 24 counties, focusing on community engagement and outreach, disaster recovery and preparedness, housing stability, food security, healthcare access, and capacity-building for nonprofit leaders.

Additionally, a core component of the CBCE program was a train-the-trainer model for community foundations to support their trusted messenger grantees. The three trainings focused on the power of capacity-building funding, understanding critical state priorities, programs, and resources, and hearing directly from trusted messenger nonprofits across California about current community needs and how trust-based, capacity-building funds support nonprofits in increasing the efficacy of their service delivery.

This report details the grant's impact and key accomplishments, highlighting how flexible, trust-based funding, along with training and education, empowered local organizations to respond effectively to their communities' unique challenges. It also presents insights into community needs, demographic data, and opportunities for continued investment, demonstrating how supporting local networks fosters resilience and long-term sustainability. While the full scope of impact extends beyond traditional metrics, the findings in this report illustrate the program's

significant role in strengthening California’s social safety net and improving the well-being of underserved populations.

Grant Program Overview

The League of California Community Foundations launched the Capacity Building and Community Engagement (CBCE) grant program in summer 2025. This partnership was tremendously beneficial in maximizing the impact of OCPSC’s resources; the League’s deep connections to community foundations across California enabled the quick, effective deployment of funds to trusted organizations closest to the communities they serve. A total of \$679,946.50 was distributed to 15 community foundations for regranting to trusted messenger organizations across California:

- Central Valley Community Foundation
- El Dorado Community Foundation
- Inland Empire Community Foundation
- Community Foundation for Monterey County
- Napa Valley Community Foundation
- Community Foundation of Nevada County
- North Valley Community Foundation
- Pasadena Community Foundation
- Sacramento Regional Community Foundation
- San Joaquin Community Foundation
- San Luis Obispo Community Foundation
- Santa Barbara Foundation
- Community Foundation Santa Cruz County
- Community Foundation Sonoma County
- Ventura County Community Foundation

Funded projects from the CBCE grant program benefited communities in 24 different counties in California:

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Butte | Riverside |
| Colusa | Sacramento |
| El Dorado | San Bernardino |
| Fresno | San Joaquin |
| Glenn | San Luis Obispo |
| Kern | Santa Barbara |
| Kings | Santa Cruz |
| Los Angeles | Sonoma |
| Madera | Stanislaus |
| Merced | Tehama |
| Monterey | Tulare |
| Nevada | Ventura |

Trusted Messenger Subgrantees

56 community-based organizations received funding through the program, with an average grant size of approximately \$10,800. The grantees were:

1	Central Valley Healing Collective (fiscal agent Central Valley Partnership, Inc.)	Central Valley
2	ExpresArte Cultural Wellness Collective	Central Valley
3	Central Valley Empowerment Alliance	Central Valley
4	Family Resource Center of SLT	El Dorado
5	Aspire Kids	El Dorado
6	Asociacion Guadalupana	El Dorado
7	Center Against Racism and Trauma	Inland Empire
8	Dorothy Ramon Learning Center	Inland Empire
9	MALO	Inland Empire
10	Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance	Inland Empire
11	Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indigene Oaxaqueno (CBDIO)	Monterey
12	Mujeres en Accion	Monterey
13	Community Leaders Coalition (a program of On the Move)	Napa Valley
14	On the Move (Family Resource Center programs, not including Community Leaders Coalition)	Napa Valley
15	Puertas Abiertas Community Resource Center	Napa Valley
16	UpValley Family Centers	Napa Valley
17	Immigration Institute of the Bay Area	Napa Valley
18	North San Juan Community Center	Nevada
19	San Juan Ridge Community Library	Nevada
20	Oak Tree FR	Nevada
21	The Peg Taylor Center	North Valley
22	Oroville Southside Community Improvement Association	North Valley
23	Promotores program of Northern Valley Catholic Social Service	North Valley
24	True North Housing Alliance	North Valley
25	Tri Counties Community Action Partnership	North Valley
26	Hmong Cultural Center	North Valley
27	Tehama Together	North Valley
28	Altogether	Pasadena
29	National Day Laborer Organizing Network	Pasadena
30	Community Clergy Coalition	Pasadena

31	Harambee Ministries	Pasadena
32	Mutual Assistance Network	Sacramento
33	Stanford Settlement Neighborhood Center	Sacramento
34	Neighborhood Wellness	Sacramento
35	Roberts Family Development Center	Sacramento
36	Concrete Development Inc	San Joaquin
37	Empowering Marginalized Asian Communities	San Joaquin
38	STAND Affordable Housing	San Joaquin
39	Center for Family Strengthening	San Luis Obispo
40	Community Action Partnership SLO	San Luis Obispo
41	805Undocufund	Santa Barbara
42	Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project	Santa Barbara
43	Buen Vecino	Santa Barbara
44	Community Bridges	Santa Cruz
45	La Familia Sana	Sonoma
46	La Luz Center	Sonoma
47	Petaluma Family Resource Center	Sonoma
48	Bienestar Collective	Sonoma
49	North Bay Organizing Project	Sonoma
50	Food Share of Ventura County	Ventura
51	LUCHA/Poder Popular	Ventura
52	Child Development Resources of Ventura County	Ventura
53	Childhood Matters	Ventura
54	Community Action Ventura County	Ventura
55	Interface Children & Family Services	Ventura
56	Women's Economic Ventures	Ventura

Demographic Data

All of the funded trusted messenger organizations and networks are focused on building personal and community resilience in the most historically marginalized and underserved communities in the face of uncertainty and change. Priority communities include:

Demographic	Number of Foundations prioritizing the population
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Low-income residents	15
Immigrants	14
BIPOC Communities	14
Seniors	6
Youth and Children	5
People Experiencing Housing Instability/Homelessness	5
People with Disabilities and/or Health Conditions	4
LGBTQIA+ Communities	2
Formerly Incarcerated	1

Activities Overview

The fifteen community foundations supported a total of 56 trusted messenger organizations across the state. These trusted messenger organizations utilized funding to strengthen and enhance their own capacity while providing a range of critical services to hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations across California; funds were utilized for:

1. Community Engagement: Events, Outreach, Education

- Conducted community outreach events, tabling, and information sessions
- Developed and distributed culturally responsive outreach materials (flyers, newsletters, media content)
- Provided education on immigration policy, health/safety issues, and community resources
- Built and piloted Trusted Messenger Networks to coordinate accurate, timely information sharing
- Expanded ambassador or promotores models to deliver community-based information
- Hosted community convenings, workshops, and public events
- Organized cultural and community-building events
- Facilitated youth and entrepreneur participation in expos and public forums
- Created spaces for community voice, feedback, and participation

2. Communications and Information Infrastructure

- Developed communications strategies and branding plans
- Built or enhanced newsletters, toolkits, and digital communication platforms
- Created interactive dashboards and reporting tools
- Improved social media presence and content strategies
- Produced community-informed media (including oral history and storytelling projects)
- Strengthened systems for disseminating multilingual, culturally appropriate information

3. Staffing, Training, and Workforce Development

- Increased staffing capacity to support outreach, service delivery, and coordination
- Provided professional development and certifications (e.g., mental health training, safety training, Red Cross, Psychological First Aid)
- Supported participation in specialized training cohorts (e.g., therapy modalities, leadership programs)
- Conducted staff retreats, wellness days, and team-building activities
- Built internal leadership capacity through coaching, supervision training, and organizational development roles

4. Mental Health and Wellness Capacity

- Expanded capacity to deliver mental health and resilience services
- Integrated culturally responsive and trauma-informed care approaches
- Developed new workshops (e.g., grounding, resilience, healing justice)
- Created referral systems connecting community members to low-cost or pro bono therapy
- Supported staff wellness and burnout prevention through structured programming

5. Organizational Infrastructure and Systems Building

- Strengthened internal systems (administrative, financial, programmatic)
- Developed evaluation frameworks, metrics, and accountability processes
- Implemented or explored case management and data systems
- Built committees, internal processes, and quality assurance tools
- Enhanced compliance, documentation, and operational workflows

6. Collaboration and Network Building

- Convened cross-organizational design teams and collaborative networks
- Strengthened partnerships among nonprofits, public agencies, and community stakeholders
- Created shared strategies and coordinated service delivery models
- Built referral pathways and cross-sector collaboration systems

7. Direct Service Expansion and Community Support

- Expanded access to basic needs services (food, shelter, transportation, internet, etc.)
- Operated emergency response services (e.g., warming shelters during extreme weather)
- Increased access to health, mental health, and social services
- Supported entrepreneurship, youth development, and ESL/life-skills programming
- Provided case management, crisis intervention, and resource navigation

8. Equipment, Facilities, and Technology Improvements

- Purchased equipment for service delivery (e.g., shelter supplies, refrigeration, security systems)
- Upgraded facilities to expand services (e.g., food access, community spaces)

- Invested in technology and software to improve coordination and outreach
- Supported operational needs such as rent, utilities, and administrative infrastructure

Impacts on Trusted Messenger Organizations

Across the cohort, trusted messenger organizations demonstrated substantial reach and activity during the grant period. Based on reported outputs, nonprofits collectively:

- Reached **hundreds to thousands of community members** through outreach, education, and direct services.
- Conducted **dozens of community events, workshops, and engagement activities.**
- Trained **dozens to over 100 staff, ambassadors, and community leaders** in areas such as culturally responsive outreach, mental health and trauma-informed care, and community engagement strategies.
- Developed **dozens of multilingual, culturally relevant resources and communications tools**, and in many cases expanded or launched new program offerings to meet emerging community needs.

Measurable outputs were reported in varying formats and levels of specificity across community foundations, reflecting differences in evaluation approaches and the flexible use of funds. Even with this variability, the data consistently point to meaningful community impact, alongside important investments in organizational capacity, partnership development, and systems-building that position trusted messenger organizations for sustained effectiveness beyond the grant period. Examples of some of the impacts on grantees include:

“The grant had an impact by stabilizing staffing and core operations needed for trusted messenger work, which allowed both organizations to focus on the community. This support strengthened culturally responsive communication and deepened trust with community members, while also increasing each organization’s ability to respond to emerging needs in real time. For example, due to recent Medi-Cal changes, CFMC and the Monterey County Health Department were able to quickly deploy additional funds for these partners to notify their communities of upcoming Medi-Cal changes. These efforts would not have been as successful if this grant had not already provided a baseline to start with.” (Monterey)

“The organizations serving immigrant populations have grown quickly in the past year to respond to the needs of the community while also grappling with the continuously evolving policy environment. This funding provided the partner organizations’ time and resources to come together to reflect and develop a shared plan. The retreat created space for lead coalition partners to build trust, strengthen relationships, and collectively define the coalition’s purpose and governance structure. The process of developing the strategic road map helped clarify roles, responsibilities, and priorities for the coalition’s steering committee and lay the foundation for more coordinated community engagement. Funding enabled staff to dedicate more time to coordination activities that support consistent coalition operations and maintain momentum among participating

organizations, including strategizing on community outreach and messaging efforts related to proposed changes to healthcare and housing access for mixed-status and immigrant households.” (Santa Barbara)

“This grant significantly enhanced Community Bridges’ ability to execute coordinated, large-scale communications campaigns that are responsive to rapidly changing policy environments affecting immigrant communities. The funding enabled the organization to cover the costs and production of multiple communitywide efforts, including the Childcare Safety Plan (CSP), grassroots outreach to businesses across shopping centers to share information on how to prepare for and respond to potential immigration enforcement actions, and Know Your Rights education and legal consultation campaigns. These investments allowed Community Bridges to strategically supplement other grant and philanthropic funding, expanding overall reach and deepening impact while establishing a strong foundation for continued work. The organization now has stronger systems for digital outreach, media engagement, and rapid-response communications, as well as deeper collaboration with regional partners. These improvements position Community Bridges to more effectively connect vulnerable populations to essential services, influence public awareness, and mobilize community advocacy in real time.” (Santa Cruz)

For a comprehensive summary on program activities, outputs, and impacts for each community foundation and their subgrantees, please reference the CBCE CF Final Report Spreadsheet.

Capacity-Building Workshops

LCCF hosted three workshops for community foundations as part of a train-the-trainer model. The three workshops were designed to equip community foundations with the knowledge they needed to effectively support their grantees with capacity-building funding as well as build greater awareness of state programs and resources available to trusted messenger organizations that could benefit the communities they serve. The workshops included:

- **Session 1 - OCPSC Programs:** The first session focused on priority programs and tools provided by OCPSC. The purpose was to strengthen understanding of OCPSC’s statewide communications and partnership strategies, including how OCPSC works and upcoming initiatives; gain knowledge about the trusted messenger network, including lessons learned from working with CBOs statewide; introduce foundations to CalKIDS and explore ways to leverage the scholarship program for their communities; and explore actionable ways for community foundations to align with and collaborate with state partners to expand outreach.
- **Session 2 – Trusted Messenger Perspectives and Needs:** The second workshop provided community foundations with an opportunity to hear directly from trusted messenger organizations who work on the frontline with underserved communities throughout the state. These organizations shared the challenges they are facing in today’s environment, - from shifting public funding, rising community needs,

misinformation, crisis fatigue, and more – and how capacity-building funding helps them weather the storm and continue supporting their communities.

- **Session 3: Community Foundation Capacity-Building Programs:** The third workshop was structured as a peer learning session for community foundations to hear from one another about effective, creative approaches to supporting nonprofit partners, through both capacity-building funding as well as community leadership initiative that foster greater collaboration and coordination among nonprofits in their communities.

All 15 community foundations participated in these sessions, with many foundations bringing multiple staff to the sessions to learn. Feedback from the community foundations included:

“The capacity-building workshops were both inspirational and practical. It was great hearing from other foundations and how they operate different programs and operations. There were several tangible ideas that our team is discussing in how we can further relationships with other organizations and build our capacity building.” (North Valley)

“Learning more about state programs such as CalKIDS was very useful. I now understand the larger goals as well as the details that have been extremely helpful when communicating with relevant trusted messenger community partners. I am better able to promote the programs to the community.” (Santa Barbara)

“San Joaquin Community Foundation is a relatively young foundation that typically offers only modest, one-year grants to local organizations and programs. The capacity-building workshops were a great resource for helping us understand how we can leverage our relationships to move local CBOs toward larger, more sustainable funding sources and statewide programs that can supplement existing services.” (San Joaquin)

“The workshops reinforced and validated our foundation’s existing approach to trust-based philanthropy and participatory grantmaking, while offering additional context on how these practices are being advanced at the state level through OCPSC. While these frameworks were not new to our team, the sessions helped sharpen our understanding of how to operationalize them in smaller, rural contexts—particularly in working with trusted messenger CBOs that have limited administrative capacity but deep community reach. As a result, we approached this grantmaking with greater intentionality around flexibility, reduced burden, and responsiveness to real-time community needs, strengthening our ability to support grassroots partners effectively.” (Nevada)

Increased Learning Between CFs and CBOs

Community foundations reported that the CBCE funding not only supported nonprofit activities, but also strengthened relationships and deepened collaboration between foundations and their grantees. In many cases, this represented a shift from more transactional grantmaking to more engaged, trust-based partnerships, with foundations playing a more active role in convening, advising, and connecting organizations. Grantees benefited from increased access to foundation staff, technical assistance, and peer networks, while foundations gained deeper

insight into community needs, on-the-ground challenges, and effective outreach strategies within specific populations.

This increased collaboration often extended beyond individual grants to include ongoing communication, shared problem-solving, and coordinated outreach efforts, positioning both foundations and nonprofits as more aligned partners in serving their communities. Several foundations noted that these strengthened relationships are likely to endure beyond the grant period, creating a stronger infrastructure for future rapid response efforts and more equitable, community-informed grantmaking. Examples included:

- Regular check-ins between foundation staff and grantees to provide support, troubleshoot challenges, and adapt strategies
- Foundations convening grantees for peer learning, information sharing, and coordination
- Collaborative development of outreach strategies and messaging tailored to specific communities
- Joint problem-solving around barriers such as staffing, community access, or service delivery
- Coordination across grantees to reduce duplication and increase reach within target populations
- Foundations connecting grantees to additional funding opportunities or partners
- Support from foundations in amplifying grantee work through communications channels (newsletters, social media, events)
- Informal relationship-building that increased trust and openness between foundations and community-based organizations
- Foundations gaining real-time feedback from grantees to inform program adjustments and funding decisions

Fast, Flexible, Trust-Based Approach

The League of California Community Foundations takes a trust-based approach to grantmaking, recognizing our community foundation partners are experts on the needs in their communities. The flexibility and speed with which community foundations could deploy the funds from this grant program was a tremendous asset, and they also appreciated the peer learning elements built in for both community foundations and for their grantees. In particular, community foundations noted that they appreciated the straightforward application process, the ability to provide capacity-building funding which many foundations cannot typically provide, and the flexibility to determine grant amounts, number of grantees, and priorities for funding in their communities. This approach to grantmaking was appreciated as an important way for community foundations to build trust with their own grantees, and for the trusted messenger organizations to have the capacity to deepen their work with communities furthest from opportunities. Feedback from the community foundations included:

“The trust and flexible funding you provided was key to making this a success. These trusted messengers already have strong relationships in the community, the funding

strengthened them and allowed them to focus on important work rather than requiring new programs to be made. Both partners reported that this flexibility and operational support were critical to sustaining their work and responding to community needs.” (Monterey)

“What worked well in this program was the combination of flexible funding and a clear emphasis on capacity-building rather than narrowly defined program outputs. This allowed grantees to address real (and very different) operational needs—such as infrastructure, staffing, and systems—that directly impact their ability to serve their communities. Each of our grantees had very successful outcomes because they were able to choose the area of focus. The program also successfully reached small, rural, trusted messenger organizations that are under-resourced but deeply embedded in their communities, and paired funding with learning opportunities that built relationships between the community foundation and the region. This was invaluable for a new foundation.” (Nevada)

“This funding created dedicated space for intentional capacity-building—something that is often difficult to prioritize amid day-to-day program demands. Because the support was flexible, we were able to pilot new approaches in a way that would not have been possible with more restrictive funding sources. The grant gave us room to experiment, learn, and build relationships with grantees.” (Pasadena)

Conclusion

Our community foundation partners and their subgrantees greatly appreciate this investment in community resilience and engagement in their local communities. OCPSC understands that building networks based on trust takes years, and LCCF is eager to continue partnering to support that vital trust-building work. We are so grateful for our partnership with you over these last few years to invest in the trusted messenger organizations that are the backbone of communities across California, which has strengthened trusted messenger organizations and the community foundations that support them, with long-lasting benefits from the increased collaboration, coordination, and peer learning as a result of these programs.