SGC Catalyst Conference Summary
Summary of Participant Feedback & Ideas

CALIFORNIA
STRATEGIC
GROWTH
COUNCIL

Overview

On February 1-2, 2023, the Strategic Growth Council (SGC), in partnership with the Milken Institute, convened nearly 300 leaders from across California and the country for the inaugural SGC Catalyst Conference. In light of the Federal Government's Justice40 Initiative and California Governor's Executive Order on Racial Equity, the event focused on building partnerships and identifying solutions to implement more equitable, climate-focused community development in California and beyond.

Aims of the conference

1. New frameworks for community development that are responsive to the Justice40 initiative and other equity considerations, climate impacts, and availability of public and private funding.

2. Identification of obstacles, opportunities, and solutions to build readiness and catalyze implementation within underserved communities.

3. Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and networking focused on developing the partnerships necessary to implement state and federal climate equity funding.

SGC
catalyst
conference
In Partnership with Milken Institute

Conference Themes

Over two days, leaders across California and the nation shared and discussed opportunities, challenges, and proven solutions to build readiness and catalyze implementation within underserved communities. Through these discussions, four key takeaways emerged:

Tribal Access & Investment

→ While several State and non-state entities are actively shaping program design to meet Tribal needs, participants identified a lack of cultural competency on the part of State agencies, a tendency to view all Tribes as a single entity, and a lack of meaningful engagement coupled with adequate resources as persistent challenges in the context of project planning and delivery within Tribal contexts.

→ Opportunities include establishing a Tribal Green Bank that leverages private sector funding for climate and equity in partnership and incorporating traditional ecological knowledge within State stewardship processes.

Pre-Implementation Challenges, Opportunities, and Proven Models in Underserved Communities

→ Technical assistance and capacity building have become core focus areas in standalone programs, such as SGC's Community Assistance for Climate Equity Program. However, participants noted that many programs still fail to account for the wide variation in community readiness to apply for and deploy available grant funds, particularly over the long term.

→ Participants identified more stable funding streams for State technical assistance programs, simplified and streamlined application processes, and targeted efforts to coordinate public and private funding as opportunities for improvement.

Criteria, Outcomes, and Accountability Mechanisms Underpinning Equitable Investment in Under-Resourced Communities

→ Workforce development efforts and multi-sector collaborations have successfully embedded equity-driven practices into program and project design. However, more work is required to allow for greater self-determination and to expand the scope and duration of funding opportunities to account for variations in community readiness and the uncertainties of project implementation.

→ Participants identified the expansion of proven strategies such as advanced pay, establishing cross-cutting Statewide guidelines for State agencies to administer and ensure accountability on federal funding subject to Justice40, and utilizing proven models such as community-based public-private partnership (CBP3) and Enhanced Infrastructure Financing (EIF) Districts to secure and direct funding opportunities in a more equitable manner.

Sustaining Investment, Scaling Infrastructure, and Replicating Outcomes in Frontline Communities

→ Presenters discussed the tensions and challenges in coordinating, sustaining, and scaling infrastructure investment across diverse place-based contexts.

→ Participants identified modeling standardized project types that blend state and federal resources to address key California issues, auditing existing state programs to see where state programs can leverage federal dollars and creating a regional agency-wide community-based partnership strategy to identify and address longer-term barriers faced by community-based organizations and other organizations.

Additional resources

For a detailed overview of the conference themes and discussions, including examples of equity-driven policy models that are working, barriers and challenges experienced, and opportunities/solutions to address the challenges, please visit the following:

➔ Full Catalyst Summary Reports

➔ Model Hub for tested policy models for equitable outcomes in under-resourced communities, California Strategic Growth Council

➔ 10kcommunities.org, The Milken Institute