

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Meeting Summary: February 16, 2024

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Nelson Hawkins called the meeting to order at 1:10pm, with special thanks to the public for joining the meeting.

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by Meagan Wylie, Facilitator.

Present (*Marks members present remotely):

- Nelson Hawkins, Chair
- Emily Burgueno, Vice Chair
- Irene Barraicua
- Nathaniel Brown
- Ruth Dalquist-Willard*
- Lawrence Harlan*
- James Nakahara
- Dorian Payán
- Thea Rittenhouse
- Doria Robinson
- Liya Schwartzman
- Qi Zhou

Welcome and Housekeeping

Meagan Wylie provided information on Zoom policies, interpretation services offered for in-person and online attendees, and the public comment process. She discussed the meeting plan and code of conduct. Slides and materials presented during the meeting are available on the Strategic Growth Council ([SGC](#)) [website](#).

ACTION: Approval of Summary

Approval of October 30, 2023, Meeting Summary.

Task Force Discussion:

A spelling correction was made to “Burgueno” under section VI. B. fifth bullet.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

The motion to approve the October 30, 2023 summary was made by Member Nakahara and seconded by Vice Chair Burgueno.

Motion passes (11-0-0*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote

Staff Report

Camille Frazier, SGC, presented the Staff Report.

Task Force Discussion:

The Task Force clarified what qualifies as an appropriate use of funds and confirmed case studies and site visits are included if they meet the goals of the Task Force. Task Force Members expressed the importance of identifying models and barriers, bringing in existing research and attending site visits.

Public Comment:

- Adam X
- Martin Bey

ACTION: Charter and Bylaws

Approval of Task Force Charter

Meagan Wylie provided a brief review the proposed draft Charter, initially shared at the October 30, 2023 meeting, before opening the floor to additional questions and feedback from Task Force members.

Task Force Discussion:

A member asked for clarification of roles regarding experts on the technical advisory committee (TAC) and its composition. Staff responded that the composition of the TAC will depend on the needs of the Task Force as they work to develop recommendations.

No additional revisions were proposed.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

A motion to adopt the Charter was made by Member Robinson and seconded Member Zhou.

Motion passes (11-0-0) *Marks abstention or absence from vote

Approval of Task Force Bylaws

Meagan Wylie next provided a brief review the proposed draft Bylaws, then invited members share questions, comments, or proposed revisions.

Task Force Discussion:

No Task Force Discussion.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

A motion to adopt the Bylaws was made by Member Rittenhouse and seconded by Member Brown.

Motion passes (11-0-0) *Marks abstention or absence from vote

DISCUSSION: Land Equity and Related Key Topic Areas

Meagan Wylie and Tessa Salzman, SGC, offered an overview of key themes from introductory conversations between Task Force members and the facilitator. Members then considered a proposed list of topics/areas of importance for Task Force to explore as it works to develop recommendations. Please refer to pages 5-13 of this meeting's [Briefing Packet](#).

Task Force Discussion:

Key Point 1: Land equity means fair and just access for all.

Task Force Members expressed the importance of including and reflecting a variety of voices and experiences when evaluating land inequities. Some expressed the need to create a principle for land equity. It was recommended to consider the concept of public land for the public good when thinking of land equity. A member encouraged their colleagues to consider more expansive relationships to land,

moving away from a colonial approach to land as a resource toward what is possible when people come into relation to it. A member noted the inconsistency of language regarding Tribes and indigenous communities and recommend careful consideration of the terms being used. They also encouraged the Task Force to consider practices that are currently criminalized but are essential to California Native Americans' agricultural practices, such as cultural burning.

Key Point 2: Land equity is achieved when barriers are removed and resources are provided.

Task Force Members communicated that models for land ownership can conflict with the ability of farmers to build wealth. One member encouraged the Task Force to consider land equity as opportunity to build wealth, noting the history of lending practices that have resulted in land inequity. Task Force members subsequently discussed the relationship of wealth to the idea of land equity. It was emphasized that building wealth should be *part* of the definition, but not *the* definition. It is important to consider economic sustainability as well as sustainability more generally.

Topic for Further Exploration 1: Land Access and Tenure

Members noted the following in relation to this topic:

- This topic is very broad topic and should be segmented further (e.g., public vs. private land, structures, tenure, and security).
- There are different definitions for what land tenure and land access is, with many different meanings and contexts, such as financial equity, legal equity, and racial equity.

Topic for Further Exploration 2: Land Access for Tribes

Members noted the following in relation to this topic:

- There is a need to prioritize land for traditional tribal uses.
- Some expressed a need for language around co-management (e.g., establishment of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or of Agreement (MOA)), and the importance of including Tribal Nations.

Topic for Further Exploration 3: Land Markets

Members noted the following in relation to this topic:

- There is a need to call out economic and development pressure on agricultural land.
- There is opportunity for the Task Force to examine how market conditions encourage following of land. Prime agricultural land is special, and that value is often lost when land is developed. There is a recent trend of conversion of agricultural lands to warehouse buildings.
- There are cases in which conversion of agricultural land to other uses can be acceptable, provided there is alignment with public good values.

Topic for Further Exploration 4: Financial Resources

Members noted the following in relation to this topic: There is a need for financial resources to support language access to enable land access.

Topic for Further Exploration 5: Sustaining Natural Resources

Members noted the following in relation to this topic: Multi-benefit land repurposing programs can be used as a model to address multiple challenges and generate co-benefits.

Topic for Further Exploration 6: Regulations

Members noted the following in relation to this topic:

- Regulations should fit under each of the other topic areas, noting Reparations Task Force recommendations as example.
- Language barriers create additional barriers when trying to comply with regulations (e.g., water quality).
- It is important to consider all forms of regulations and their impacts.

Topic for Further Exploration 7: Meeting Diverse Needs

Members noted the following in relation to this topic:

- There is a strong need for healthcare access in rural communities.
- Cost of living and other factors that shape land inequities should be considered in Task Force discussions.
- Multi-lingual outreach materials are needed for all programs.

General Comments

A member described that ideas for developing recommendations should not be limited by existing barriers/challenges. Rather, exploratory discussions will lead to the types of solutions that are needed.

A member noted that there are people doing work that supports the state (e.g., building soil health) that are uncompensated.

Topics to Add

Task Force Members recommended adding the following topics to the currently proposed draft list of “topics for further exploration”: water rights, land back, and legal resources.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

DISCUSSION: Preliminary Work Plan

Camille Frazier and Meagan Wylie presented an updated draft work plan including a review of resources currently available to the Task Force to support their work, the ability of the Task Force to form subcommittees, and an updated timeline through January 1, 2026.

Task Force Discussion:

A member shared there are two producer advisor committees at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) that can also serve as a resource. The CDFA Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Producer Advisory Committee will now have ALETF updates at each meeting.

Task Force Members considered preparations for the next meeting. They requested support staff’s research efforts to prepare for Meeting #3 should focus on a review of barriers and opportunities in existing programs. To the extent possible, it will be helpful to identify the barriers experienced by specific groups in utilizing these programs. Members expressed a need to hear directly from individuals doing this work at upcoming meetings to inform their discussions. Members recommended to staff some parameters of existing program assessment, such as eligibility requirements, grant size, outcomes, and funding source. Members encouraged a focus on existing efforts as they relate to land access, land tenure, and land security.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

General Public Comment

The Task Force received public comment from:

- Martin Bey
- Adam X
- Jamie Fanous
- Darryl Lucien
- Kendra Johnson
- Shanna Atherton-Bauer

Meeting Adjournment

Meagan Wylie confirmed action items for Staff and Task Force members:

- Staff to distribute approved October 30, 2023 meeting summary.
- Staff to distribute adopted Charter and Bylaws.
- Staff to conduct review of existing programs related to agriculture land equity, with a focus on opportunities and barriers as they relate to land access, land tenure, and land security.
- Staff to continue coordination of logistics for Meeting #3.
- Members to share suggestions for guest speakers at upcoming meetings with Staff.
- Members to share suggestions for site visits or field trips with Staff.
- Staff to prepare and distribute draft meeting summary.

Chair Hawkins and Vice Chair Burgueno provided closing comments. The next meeting is scheduled for May 9, 2024 in San Diego, with an option to join remotely.

Chair Hawkins adjourned the meeting at 5:00pm.