



CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

To: California Strategic Growth Council Members
From: Jessica Buendia
Re: Executive Director Report to the Council – June 29, 2021

Organizational and Staffing Updates

- SGC Chair Kate Gordon has transitioned to the Biden-Harris Administration. Beginning June 15, Vice Chair Flad is serving as Acting SGC Chair.
- SGC Deputy Director Jessica (Jessie) Buendia is serving as Acting SGC Executive Director until the Governor's Office selects a new Executive Director.
- Saharnaz Mirzazad is promoted to Deputy Director of Community Investment and Planning and will oversee the AHSC and TCC programs.
- Kirin Kumar is serving as interim Health and Equity Program Manager.
- SGC is hiring for a Chief Communications and External Affairs Officer.
- SGC is hiring for an AHSC Program Manager and Analyst.
- SGC is hiring for a HEP Program Manager and Analyst.

Investment Program Updates

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC)

Staff: Saharnaz Mirzazad, Shep Wilbun, and California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) Staff Team

- Following the Council's approval of the AHSC Round 6 Guidelines at the February meeting, staff issued the Round 6 Notice of Funding Availability for approximately \$405 million. Applications are due June 8 at 5:00 p.m. Staff at the California Air Resources Board (CARB) issued the AHSC Quantification Methodology and Benefits Calculator Tool following guidelines adoption.
- On March 11 and 16, staff from SGC, HCD, and CARB hosted application webinars, covering the program's background, eligibility requirements, scoring criteria, key topics, use of the benefits calculator tool, the application itself, and resources to help potential applicants. Over 230 individuals attended the two webinars and a recording is available on The Strategic Growth Council [YouTube](#) page.
- In late March, staff hosted 17 consultations with prospective applicants to answer project-specific questions.
- All but four projects awarded in rounds one, two, and three of AHSC are under contract or have completed construction, including all projects from the first funding round.
- AHSC has received two project extension requests during the past month from the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development. The two projects requesting an extension are the 266 4th Street project [Round 5] and the Treasure Island – Parcel C3.1 project [Round 4]. Both projects cited complications with financing for their extension requests. SGC is engaging with them to determine the proper course forward.

Transformative Climate Communities Program (TCC)

Staff: Saharnaz Mirzazad, Sophie Young, Alex Gallo, Jerry Rivero, and California Department of Conservation (DOC) Staff Team

- The Governor's Comeback Plan included a proposal to continue TCC funding for \$420 million over 3 years (\$140 million/year), which would enable at least 15 more investments in disadvantaged communities across California. The TCC program has a planning pipeline that has prepared 18 communities for future capital infrastructure funding. Three

of the 18 former planning grantees were awarded Round 3 Implementation Grants in 2020 (Oakland, Stockton, Riverside).

- The UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation released the 2021 Annual Progress Evaluation Reports in May, which document the progress to date at all three Round 1 sites (Fresno, Ontario, Watts), and one of the Round 2 sites (Northeast San Fernando Valley). [Reports](#) can be seen on the UCLA website. Sacramento State University's Institute for Social Research will publish a progress report on the second Round 2 site (Sacramento) next year. The reports chronicle each project's key accomplishments and COVID-19 responses, and demonstrate that investments in both physical and social infrastructure are critical to strengthening resiliency and preparing communities for future climate and health emergencies.
- TCC projects are beginning to hold more in-person events as the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions lift. Over the last couple months, several community tree planting, garden education, and energy efficiency outreach events have been held in Watts, Fresno, and Pacoima. Food rescue and organic gardening projects have provided critical food and produce distribution to the communities of Stockton, Ontario, and Watts during the pandemic.
- Green Together: Northeast San Fernando Valley (Round 2 Implementation Grant) held a virtual launch event for the Green Together Coalition on May 19. Acting Executive Director Jessica Buendia gave remarks alongside Assemblymember Luz Rivas on the importance of providing the infrastructure funding to make the community's longstanding vision for a green neighborhood a reality for its residents.
- Ontario Together (Round 1 Implementation Grant) held a grand opening on June 17 for their completed affordable housing project Vista Verde Apartments, which includes 100 affordable units, solar panels, a community garden, and access to improved bus service. SGC was not able to send representation due to the COVID19 travel restrictions.

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC)

Staff: SGC partners with Virginia Jameson and her Department of Conservation Staff Team

- Round 7 Grants: Acquisition pre-proposals were due June 1. SALC received 23 acquisition pre-proposals totaling 29,656 acres and \$65.18 million in requested funding. Planning pre-proposals are due July 1
- SALC team held the following outreach events: two equity and SALC listening sessions to inform Round 8 Guidelines (64 attendees), one general listening session to inform Round 8 Guidelines (31 attendees), and one preproposal technical assistance workshop (34 attendees)

Climate Change Research Program (CCR)

Staff: Elizabeth Grassi, Leah Fisher, Fabiha Zaman, and Nicole Hernandez

- While the Governor's Comeback Plan does not include a proposal to provide CCR grant funding, it continues to be a priority to SGC and its mission. CCR is conducting internal program evaluation to identify, share, and learn from results of research grant awards that are beginning to conclude their project. The CCR will also play a key role in the Fifth Assessment proposed through the Governor's Comeback Plan that includes two new staff positions focused on lifting the CCR's program model of community and partner-driven research to inform engagement.
- The CCR Program's Research Investment Plan (RIP) guides the development and implementation of the program and provides a foundation for all the Council's research investments. AB 109, the Budget Act that established the Climate Change Research program in 2017, directs SGC to develop the RIP and the current RIP states that it will be revised every three years (2021). SGC will work with the program steering committee to update the RIP to serve as a Research Strategy and Framework in coordination and

collaboration with the update to the State's Adaptation Strategy. SGC is working closely with OPR, CNRA, and other member agencies as they conduct stakeholder engagement to ensure research and knowledge gaps are captured. The partnership allows for leveraging and coordination on stakeholder engagement to support multiple State policy efforts. Staff will seek input and strategic direction from the Council, key staff, and the Program's Steering Committee throughout the year.

Tribal Government Challenge Program (TGC)

Staff: Elizabeth Grassi, Leah Fisher, Ena Lupien, Blake Deering, Theresa Cesena, and the California Energy Commission (CEC) Staff Team

- SGC, in partnership with the California Energy Commission (CEC), is administering the Tribal Government Challenge Program, which includes the Tribal Government Challenge Planning Grant Program and the statewide California Tribal Gap Analysis.
- SGC staff participated in the CEC's 3rd Tribal Energy Resiliency Conference, which aimed to inform California Native American Tribes about state and federal programs and opportunities for increasing tribal energy resiliency, as well as informing State and Federal leaders about tribal perspectives, needs, and objectives. The conference had a record turnout for number of Tribes across the State. Staff facilitated a session that brought together four of the TGC planning grantees to discuss their work and goals, and also presented on SGC's work to date with Tribes at a session focused on State funding opportunities.

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Community Assistance for Climate Equity (CACE)

Staff: Kirin Kumar, Ena Lupine, Coral Abbott, and Sarah Risher

Regional Climate Collaboratives and Partners Advancing Climate Equity:

- The Governor's Comeback Plan includes a proposal to fund the Regional Climate Collaboratives grant program (SB 1072, Leyva) at \$20 million over 2 years (\$10 million/year). Staff have worked the last year and a half to advance capacity building and technical assistance efforts that both meet the needs of under-resourced communities while providing valuable insights into effective ways to structure an eventual RCC grant program. If funded through the June 15 budget, staff will immediately enact a guideline development process.
- The Governor's Comeback Plan also includes funding to continue staffing three positions on the Community Assistance for Climate Equity team to implement SB 1072.
- The Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE) cohort will continue to convene through the end of July to gain access to skills and resources around climate adaptation and resilience, State funding, and initiating community-led projects. Staff have coordinated with the Project team on curriculum, resource development, and technical assistance strategy to support participants achieve goals identified during their time in the cohort. Staff have met with cohort participants to help guide the development of their community needs assessments, and have facilitated trainings from a number of State agencies to discuss how their programs, policies, and tools could benefit PACE leaders and their communities, including the Office of Planning and Research and California Climate Investments.

Climate Change Investments Technical Assistance Program:

- Staff launched a Request for Information to California Climate Investments administering agencies to gather an inventory of the technical assistance and capacity building services that are currently available to under-resourced communities, and to gather

input on how SGC can best support agencies in expanding or creating new technical assistance and capacity building activities. Staff is currently following up with State Agencies that filled out the RFI to discuss potential opportunities to partner and support their TA efforts. Staff met with the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, Coastal Commission, CEC, HCD, Public Utilities Commission, State Waterboards, and Workforce Development Board, and will continue meeting with State Agencies over the summer.

- SGC selected a consultant team for the Capacity Building For Local Governments Request for Proposals. This project will build upon the success of the first round of the BOOST program, providing hands-on capacity building technical assistance to 5-7 small/medium sized jurisdictions on topics related to climate and equity.
- Staff continue to manage and support a variety of technical assistance contracts and activities including assistance for applicants to AHSC, SALC, CARB's Sustainable Transportation Equity Project (STEP), and CDFA's Climate Smart Agriculture Programs, in addition to the ongoing implementation of the California Climate Investments Technical Assistance Program Evaluation.
- SGC and DOC partnered with UC ANR to hire two full-time SALC technical assistance providers located in Fresno and San Diego to support local governments, land trusts, and other stakeholders in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California in applying for SALC Planning and Acquisition Grants.
- Thanks to a partnership with SGC, Caltrans recently released two Invitations For Bid to select technical assistance providers for the Low Carbon Transportation Operations Program (LCTOP) and Transit and Inter-city Rail Capitol Program (TIRCP). The LCTOP TA will support a series of capacity building workshops to help transit agencies throughout the state design community-engaged LCTOP projects. The TIRCP TA will provide implementation assistance to TIRCP awardees to help maximize benefits to priority populations throughout project implementation through outreach and community engagement.

Collaborative Policy Initiatives

Health and Equity Program (HEP)

Staff: Kirin Kumar (interim program manager), Bo Chung, and Michael Jimenez

- SGC Acting Executive Director Jessie Buendia and HEP Program Associate Michael Jimenez presented to the CDPH Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee public meeting on June 15 on the HiAP Task Force planning process, CCORE learning year, and SGC Racial Equity Working Group.
- The SGC Racial Equity Working Group met with the Attorney General's Office and the GO Tribal Liaisons to align racial equity activities and seek alignment opportunities across SGC agencies.
- Race Forward provided SGC, OPR, and CalVolunteers the results of the Racial Equity Survey conducted in Fall 2020. Results are being compiled to share with staff in the summer 2021.
- Staff hosted an information session with Latino Coalition for a Health California on April 29 to assist with alignment and future community outreach opportunities.
- Staff hosted two monthly virtual culture share events – Asian-American Pacific Islander Heritage Month and Juneteenth – for staff to share stories and experiences of current cultural events they celebrate or observe.

Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Staff: SGC partners with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Public Health Institute (PHI) to staff the Health in All Policies Taskforce. The Taskforce brings together

approximately 20 agencies to integrate health and equity into programs and policies that advance State priorities.

- UC Berkeley's Othering and Belonging Institute hosted a series of four listening sessions to engage key stakeholders in understanding needs, opportunities, barriers, and next steps related Health and All Policies. The listening sessions funded through a contract with SGC were held to ground truth and further extrapolate on surveys conducted earlier this year. The findings from these information gathering efforts will inform the work of the HiAP Task Force moving forward.
- SGC Staff drafted a 5-Year HiAP Task Force workplan as a tracking, decision-making, and implementation tool around high-priority health and equity topics. SGC staff coordinated and hosted organization-specific review sessions for the HiAP Partnership Team in early June, inviting partners to review the draft workplan and provide input on how HEP can improve the template for future HiAP Task Force activities.
- The HiAP Partnership (SGC, PHI, CDPH) is planning to reconvene the HiAP Task Force to identify and coordinate next steps for advancing health and racial equity across State Government in early Fall. Staff drafted a list of racial equity-focused topics to guide future HiAP partnership and Task Force activities.

Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP)

Staff: Kirin Kumar (interim program manager), SGC Program and Administrative Managers, Bo Chung, and Michael Jimenez

- HEP staff conducted root cause analyses with each program team to identify strategies and results to reduce racial inequities internally and externally.
- HEP team analyzed and will report back results from the GARE workforce survey highlighting the strengths and areas of improvement for each division.
- HEP team provided technical assistance to the Office of Planning and Research on using Results-Based Accountability (RBA) tools to conduct root-cause analysis and development strategies.

Capitol Collaborative on Race and Equity (CCORE)

Staff: SGC partners with the Public Health Institute to host a racial equity capacity-building Program for California State government institutions and employees. CCORE brings together approximately 30 agencies, departments, boards, and offices to build a people-power movement inside of California State government to advance racial equity by deploying organizing principles inside and outside of the system.

Sessions/Learning Year Updates

- On May 19th the [2021 Government Alliance on Race & Equity Annual Membership Meeting](#) featured CCORE staff presenting on California's efforts and also included separate breakout sessions for SGC, CalEPA, and California Arts Council to highlight their racial equity progress. Acting Executive Director Jessie Buendia and Racial Equity Strategist Holly Nickels provided a presentation titled "The Inside-Outside Job of Organizing Sustainable DEI Efforts: Culture, Capacity Building, and System Change" at two venues, including the GARE Annual Membership Meeting, on May 19, and the American Public Human Services Association Third Thursday Series on Health and Human Services, on May 20. This presentation covered SGC's co-sponsorship of CCORE (with PHI), SGC's Racial Equity Resolution, and SGC's actions to infuse racial equity into its HiAP framework.
- Highlights from SGC's Racial Equity Resolution update and CCORE were featured in a recent article by the Public Health Institute. The article shared numerous accomplishments made by Council agencies and quotes from agency leaders. Read

more here: https://www.phi.org/about/impacts/california-state-leaders-highlight-racial-equity-work/?mc_cid=506f4b7705&mc_eid=c13c62fff2

- On May 28th CCORE staff participated in the initial meeting of [SACOG's Race, Equity & Inclusion External Working Group](#) to provide technical guidance and support as they deepen their work and create workplans.
- Throughout the month of May team coordinators participated in one:one meetings with CCORE staff to celebrate successes, and access coaching and technical assistance in support of their racial equity goals.
- The CCORE Learning cohort convened June 9 to expand their skills in applying racial equity tools and review progress on their pilot projects. Public Health Institute and O&G Racial Equity Collaborative consultants served as co-trainers for this session.
- CCORE Learning Cohort team coordinators convened on June 22 for additional training to support their teams in applying the racial equity tool and building and maintaining team cohesion.
- OPR/SGC CCORE coordinators (Bo Chung, Michael Jimenez, and Dana Nothnagel) met with CCORE instructors from the Public Health Institute to discuss successes, challenges, and lessons learned during the first 9 months of the Learning Cohort.

Land Use Planning and Economic Development

Staff: Emily Tibbott, Egon Terplan, and Bo Chung

Partnership with High-Speed Rail Authority:

- Staff are partnering with HSR staff to support project delivery, specifically reviewing site and station community planning activities in the Central Valley.
- Staff is coordinating with HSRA on exploring immediate projects to work with Fresno partners on station area site beautification, site activation, and community engagement.
- Staff is exploring the potential to work with a more rural station community – possibly Hanford – regarding agricultural lands protection scenarios.

Land Conservation Initiatives:

- Since the passage of EO N-82-20, staff has supported stakeholder outreach regarding the specific elements of the Executive Order and their timing. As part of an inter-agency policy team, staff is playing an active role in the drafting of the CNRA-led Climate Smart Lands Strategy, which will be released for public comment this summer.
- Directed by staff, Luskin School of Public Affairs graduate student, Robyn Wong, completed her report 'Supporting Land Conservation in California: A Toolkit of Financial Incentives for Landowners and Communities.' Staff engaged leadership at CNRA, DOC, CDFA, CARB, OPR, SGC, American Farmland Trust and The Nature Conservancy in creating the final document. Staff conducted an informal briefing to greater SGC and OPR staff, as well as select partners, followed by a formal release of the report.
- Working as part of a steering committee composed of leadership staff at DOC, HCD, and CARB, staff has initiated a series of agency-targeted educational workshops on conservation and housing. The purpose of the series is to break down silos between conservation and housing programs, planning, and policy, such that efforts in both arenas better support cross-sectoral needs and on-the-ground outcomes in service of State planning priorities.
- Staff is involved in inter-agency leadership efforts regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, including how to minimize local

economic impacts, and how to support regional land use planning. In addition, staff is exploring how to incorporate SGMA needs in the SALC Program.

Regional Planning initiatives:

- Staff successfully pushed for inclusion in the California Comeback Plan of a \$500 million in investment in augmenting the exiting Regional Early Action Planning Grant (REAP) funds. The proposed new program would focus on reducing VMT and accelerating infill development. The current REAP program (initiated in 2019) was focused on helping regions meet their higher RHNA targets. This proposed augmentation would also expand to allow for both planning and infrastructure investments across housing and transportation. While the expanded REAP program would remain housed at HCD, they would collaborate on program guidelines and application review with SGC, OPR and CARB. Staff worked collaboratively with HCD in the development of the Trailer Bill Language.
- Staff finalized a contract with UC ITS pursuant to AB 285 to produce a report assessing the state transportation system. The team is kicking off work in June 2021 with a team of researchers from UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UC Davis.
- Staff continue to manage the State/MPO work group that consist of the planning directors of the 18 MPOs and members of key state agencies (SGC, OPR, HCD, BCSH, CalSTA, CTC, Caltrans, CARB).
- Staff produced a final memo from a team of UC Berkeley students describing a process map of the various policy levers and roles of state agencies (CARB, HCD, Caltrans, CTC, OPR, SGC) in supporting/regulating the regional planning process across California's metropolitan regions. This process map was vetted by representatives across numerous state agencies.

Media Clips

- **KQED: One Counterintuitive Idea in Newsom's Budget: Climate Solutions Are About Neighborhoods Thriving**

<https://www.kqed.org/science/1974832/the-newsom-budgets-counterintuitive-idea-communities-can-thrive-and-address-climate-change-at-same-time>

- **CISION: The University of San Francisco School of Management Awarded Large Grant from the California Strategic Growth Council**

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-university-of-san-francisco-school-of-management-awarded-large-grant-from-the-california-strategic-growth-council-301294357.html>

- **Affordable Housing Finance: Mixed-Use Development Rises in San Francisco's Mission District**

https://www.housingfinance.com/developments/mixed-use-development-rises-in-san-franciscos-mission-district_o

