

Regional Climate Collaboratives Draft Guidelines Engagement Summary

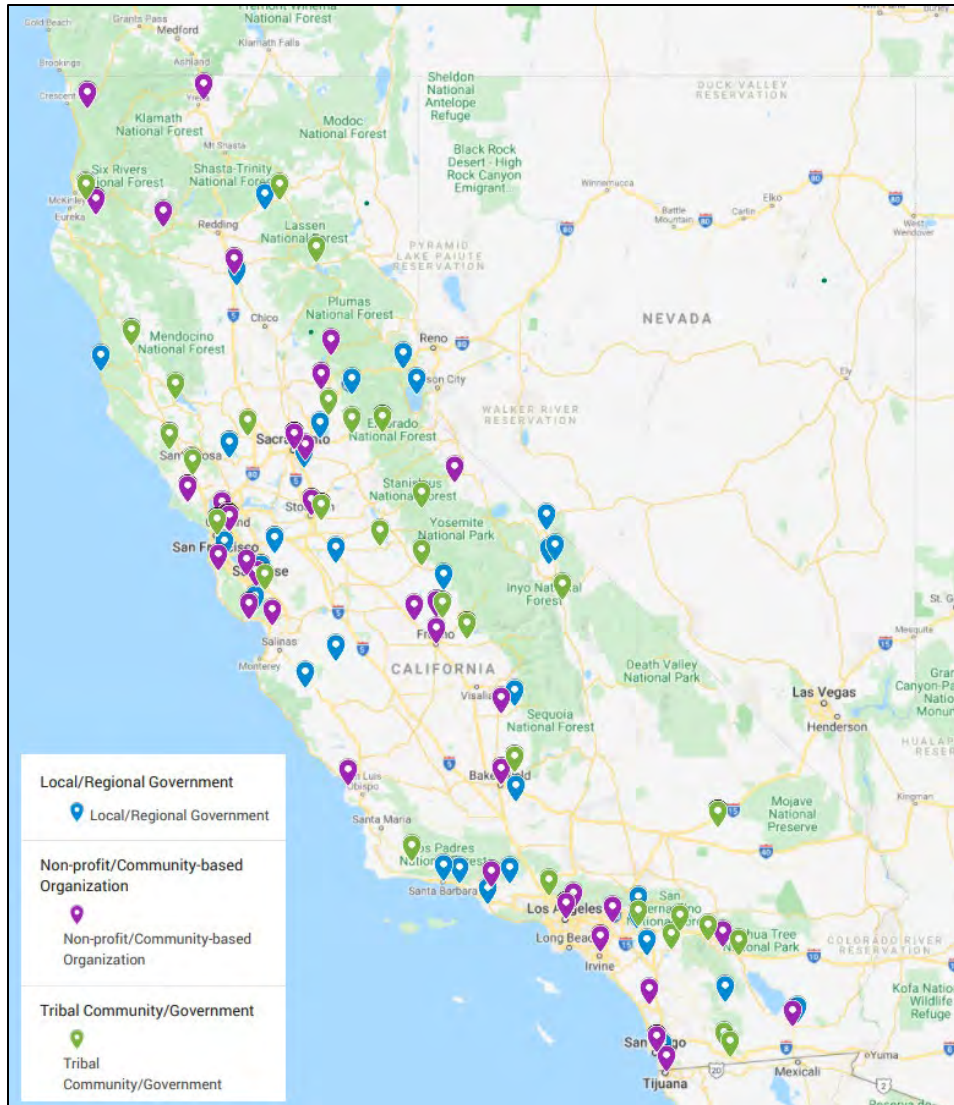
This engagement summary provides a high-level overview of engagement with stakeholders over the months preceding the adoption of the final Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) Program Guidelines in April 2022 by the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC). While the summary primarily focuses on engagement and feedback received prior to the formal development of the guidelines, it has been updated to include the following formation about public engagement during the guideline development process.

SGC's Community Assistance for Climate Equity (CACE) program released the Draft FY 22-23 RCC Guidelines for public review in February 2022 for a 35-day public comment period. During that time, staff held a series of five public workshops to receive feedback on the Guidelines. Additionally, staff held a statewide informational webinar at the outset of the public review period to share more information about the program and help inform stakeholder feedback. The workshops built upon listening sessions and engagement that occurred prior to the release of the draft guidelines and reached communities throughout California. The workshops were promoted broadly through public health, community development, environmental justice, climate adaptation and resilience, health equity, and other related networks to reach a range of stakeholders including local nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, universities, private organizations, local and regional government, and State government partner agencies. SGC relied on and encouraged attendees from past listening sessions as well as guideline workshops to promote the engagement opportunities through their networks to facilitate broader reach. In total, SGC engaged over 400 individuals during the guideline review period.

Feedback received from the public is outlined in the RCC Staff Report Attachment B - Round 1 Regional Climate Collaborative Program Guidelines Memo. Feedback included a desire to clarify information about how applicants would compete within the funding round, comments on how the scoring criteria should be weighed, recommendations on eligible activities and costs, and further request for clarification on the collaborative stakeholder structure and evaluation requirements. Staff resoundingly heard a request to minimize burden on applicants by creating a simple and straightforward application process and ensuring that funds can be used to support staff costs and other costs associated with building long term capacity.

The remainder of this summary provides greater detail on how engagement was carried out to inform the draft RCC guidelines and the feedback received prior to February 2022.

Between November 2021 and February 2022, the Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) program team hosted a series of 4 listening sessions, 7 focus groups, and numerous key informant interviews to gather feedback and input on the development of guidelines for the RCC program. Throughout these sessions the team heard from community groups, local and regional government agencies, Tribal communities and governments, and State agencies from across California. The map on the following page provides a visual breakdown of the regions represented across the state.



This map was developed using information provided by registrants to the workshops. The California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) staff did our best to estimate the service area each organization was based in, as well as to identify the organization type. As the map was created using registration data, this may overestimate the individuals and organizations who ultimately attended the workshops. Not represented in this map, but important to note are organizations with a statewide area of service and state agencies that participated across all RCC listening sessions.

Key Feedback & Takeaways

Across the state, a few key themes were identified as priorities and where the RCC program could support the development of collaboratives and encourage community-driven processes.

Encourage trust-building and the development of long-term partnerships and collaboratives:

- There is an existing lack of trust between communities and government. The RCC program should provide tools for trust and relationship building like neutral facilitators and help develop governance structures.
- Communities should have access to organized communications channels to share information and resources amongst themselves. The RCC program should support structures that enable peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
- Community-based organizations would benefit from having support to identify potential partnerships. The RCC program could provide networking opportunities and contacts.

Meet organizational needs through eligible costs and activities:

- The RCC program can build organizational capacity through funding staff time spent planning and coordinating collaboratives.
- The RCC program should provide funds to incentivize community engagement and compensate participation. Costs to participate such as childcare, food, and transportation access should be covered. Stipends and gift cards should be provided to incentivize communities to get involved.
- Community organizers and residents need training and educational activities to build power and shift decision-making processes in favor of community input. Training activities should include opportunities to develop technical skills, grant writing skills, conflict management skills, and community liaison abilities.

Create long-term tangible outcomes for communities and leaders:

- Communities will be able to receive increased funding through successful grant applications.
- Communities will see lessened environmental and health impacts through funded climate adaptation and resiliency projects.
- Collaboratives will work together past single projects and funding timelines. Relationships will be sustainable and long-term partnerships where organizations can share knowledge.
- Process changes and decision-making will shift towards community-owned processes.

Define flexible 'regions' to be funded by the RCC program:

- Regions should be defined by challenges, needs, and climate goals.
- The RCC program should allow for regions of varying sizes and scales that can cater to the specific needs of the region.
- The RCC program should ensure that isolated communities are supported by including cities and unincorporated areas of a county.
- Regions should not divide Tribal communities.

Listening Sessions Overview

Registrants and Participants

Event	Date	Participants
Investing in People Power: RCC Guidelines Development Kick-off Webinar	11/10/21 10-11:30am	Registrants: 138, Participants: 91
Joint RCC & VCP Rural Communities Listening Session	11/17/21 10am-12pm	Registrants: 115, Participants: 75
General Listing Session #1	11/18/21 1-2:30pm	Registrants: 94, Participants: 40
Joint RCC & VCP Tribal Communities Listening Session	11/30/21 1-3pm	Registrants: 115, Participants: ~60
General Listening Session #2	12/1/21 1:30-3pm	Registrants: 123, Participants: ~55

General Listening Sessions Discussion Takeaways

Open to the general public, the RCC program team hosted two General Listening Sessions where they asked a series of questions and listened to community feedback.

In response to the following questions:

- *'What barriers do you face in building partnerships with others?'*
- *'What are costs you see as necessary for this grant to fund?'*
- *'What do you see as medium-long term outcomes of collaboratives operating in a community or region?'*
- *'How can collaboratives lead to more community-driven planning and decision-making?'*
- *'Knowing this program is focused on supporting the most under-resourced communities' access to funding for priority projects, what is the appropriate size of a region for this program?'*

We heard from participants that community-based organizations face a multitude of needs ranging from funded staff time to training and educational opportunities for long-term capacity building skills. The RCC program could be used to facilitate meeting these needs through supporting activities centered around *funding organizational administrative needs, building trust and partnerships, and incentivizing community participation.*

Some of the specific feedback we heard includes:

Organizational Needs and Costs

- Community based organizations (CBOs) and groups should be compensated for the staff time spent attending meetings and planning for collaborative work.
- Neutral managing stakeholders should have key administrative responsibilities and will need to be funded for those activities.
- CBO staff need training and educational opportunities to develop grant writing skills, technical skills, conflict management skills, and more long-term capacity building skills.

- There is a need to fund staff positions dedicated to coordinating collaborative work and aligning missions and visions.

Building Trust and Partnerships

- There is an existing lack of trust between CBOs and governments that may be mediated by neutral facilitators, climate liaisons in government, and establishing governance structures.
- The lack of trust between CBOs and government also stems from transparency issues and being over asked to participate in workshops without follow-up on final outcomes.
- Competition between CBOs for funding and resources hinders trust and relationship building, requiring efforts to open communications channels and share knowledge.
- CBOs require support in identifying potential partnerships and would benefit from the State providing networking opportunities and contact lists.

Community Participation and Engagement

- Communities should be compensated for the time they spend participating in engagement activities as well as be provided with incentives to attend. Costs to participate include childcare assistance, food, transportation access, and translation and interpretation.
- Community education and removal of exclusionary language would allow people to understand and have real participation in conversations around environment and climate.
- Community engagement should encourage grassroots pathways to policy and shift decision-making power and processes to be more inclusive of community input. A community equity fund could set budget to train community advocates in informed decision-making.

Medium-Long Term Outcomes of Collaboratives

- Collaboratives will have more capacity to apply for and be successful in receiving funding for projects. Communities will see tangible benefits through these projects.
- The RCC program will help build civic and social infrastructure that supports collaboratives past single projects and funding timelines. .
- The RCC program will also assist in trust building and developing long-term relationships where collaboratives can share best practices and point to success stories and pilot projects to be replicated and expanded in future years.

Appropriate 'Region' Size

- The RCC program should allow for multiple sizes of regions to promote building and expanding existing networks.
- Regions can vary by scale (city, county, region), population density, issue areas.
- RCC regions should align with other existing definitions from other state programs
- Consider that regions should be large enough that central projects can be effective, but not so large that the needs of the region far exceed what funding amounts are available.

Rural Communities Listening Session Discussion Takeaways

The RCC program team also hosted a Rural Communities Listening Session to hear from community groups and local leaders based in rural areas across California.

In response to the following questions:

- *'What barriers do you face in building partnerships with others?'*
- *'What types of organizations have you been successful in building partnership with?'*
- *'What are costs you see as necessary for this grant to fund?'*
- *'What do you see as medium-long term outcomes of collaboratives operating in a community or region?'*
- *'How can collaboratives lead to more community-driven planning and decision-making?'*
- *'Knowing this program is focused on supporting the most under-resourced communities' access to funding for priority projects, what is the appropriate size of a region for this program?'*

We heard from participants that rural communities face *time and organizational costs constraints, barriers to collaboration and developing partnerships, and lack political support or sway* with the elected officials and local governments in their area. The RCC program would provide the most value in funding activities that build capacity around these areas.

Some of the specific feedback we heard includes:

Organizational Needs and Costs

- Time, staff, and resource constraints prevent organizations from collaborating. The RCC program could fund staff time and allow budget for on call consultants for collaboratives.
- Organizations need capacity building to support planning and implementation processes. The RCC program could provide funding for accessing data sources and tools, completing needs assessments, and providing staff with legislative training to track and write bills.
- Organizations also need community engagement support. The RCC program could provide funding for outreach efforts, stipends for community participation, and provide translation and interpretation services.

Building Trust and Partnerships – Including Government Relations

- Work in rural communities can be siloed. There is sometimes resistance to collaboration due to competition for funding. Grants like the RCC program should be designed for co-mingling and encourage sharing resources.
- There can be a lack of political support in rural communities to tackle climate related issues. The RCC program could fund environmental and climate educational opportunities to build understanding and support among elected officials and other decision makers.

Medium-Long Term Outcomes of Collaboratives

- Collaboratives will be able to leverage resources, existing work, and funding to draw more funding down.

- The RCC program will support alignment of long-term plans and enable collaboratives to work together past single projects.
- The relationships and trust built from engaging in the RCC program will increase government and community coordination and outreach efforts.

Appropriate 'Region' Size

- Regions should account for multiple counties, but not so many as to become a mega-region.
- RCC regions should align with existing definitions being developed in other State efforts.
- The scale of regions should be flexible to account for project types.
- Regions should support exceptionally isolated communities and include cities and unincorporated areas of a county.

Tribal Communities Listening Session Discussion Takeaways

The RCC program team also hosted a Tribal Communities Listening Session to hear from Tribal government and community leaders, and organizations that work closely with Tribes, and gather their input and feedback about the RCC program.

In response to the following questions:

- *'What types of organizations have you been successful in building partnership with?'*
- *'What types of organizations do you want to build partnership with?'*
- *'What barriers do you face in building partnerships with others?'*
- *'What are costs you see as necessary for this grant to fund?'*
- *'What are examples of collaborative processes you've been involved in that have worked well? What are the elements that created success?'*
- *'What do you see as medium-long term outcomes of collaboratives operating in a community or region?'*
- *'How can collaboratives lead to more community-driven planning and decision-making?'*
- *'Knowing this program is focused on supporting the most under-resourced communities' access to funding for priority projects, what is the appropriate size of a region for this program?'*

We heard from participants that Tribal communities face hefty expenses in project development and implementation that acts as a barrier to building capacity and partnerships. Some best practices that the RCC program could support are centered around *funding Tribal costs and needs, building trust and relationships, and protecting Tribal sovereignty.*

Some of the specific feedback we heard includes:

Needs and Costs

- The RCC program should fund staff time for Tribes to participate in collaboratives and support outreach and engagement needs for building partnerships with outside entities. Microgrants could support longer term staff over months of engagement cycles.
- Tribes face hefty expenses to get projects off the ground and need funding sources to meet project completion goals.

- The RCC should establish a point of contact on the program for Tribal Partners in Collaboratives to contact with questions about State funding programs.

Building Trust and Partnerships

- Tribes have been successful in building partnerships with Native-led non-profits, community-based organizations, Tribal-serving educational and academic programs, Tribal governments, and neighboring Tribes.
- The RCC program can encourage knowledge sharing between Tribal communities by providing microgrants to support engagement and collaboration.
- The RCC program should ensure that Tribal engagement is authentic and that collaboratives make meaningful efforts to include Tribes in project planning processes from the start. MOUs could be a tool for Tribes to advocate for needs and secure authentic partnerships.

Protecting Tribal Sovereignty

- The RCC program should ensure protections of Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK), intellectual property, and data sharing.
- Tribal sovereignty should be respected in partnership agreements and there should be clarity around the need for and criteria of limited waivers of sovereign immunity.
- RCC regions should be defined to ensure that Tribal boundaries are not split up.

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews Discussion Takeaways

In addition to listening sessions, the RCC program team conducted a series of focus group meetings and key informant interviews to gather more input and feedback on the RCC program. Across these interviews, we heard how the RCC program could best support the development of collaboratives and make funding more accessible.

Some of the specific feedback we heard includes:

Collaboratives and Partnership Structures

- There can be a power differential between grassroots organizations and larger or more well capacitated organizations with more funding. The RCC program should consider how to reshape who has access to funding and decision-making processes.
- The RCC program should encourage relationship building across sectors – bridging technical partners and their expertise with community-based organizations and their local knowledge. Cross-sector relationships with technical partners and local government can help ground them in social justice to avoid perpetuating harmful dynamics and repressive structures.
- Managing stakeholders identified for the RCC program should be anchor institutions with the capacity to ensure meaningful engagement with partners by bringing them into decision-making processes.
- Managing stakeholders should also be willing to hold space and employ conflict resolution practices between partners in the collaborative.

Costs and Activities

- The RCC program should build in structure for peer-to-peer learning and information sharing opportunities. Collaboratives funded by the RCC program will be starting points for relationships, partnerships, planning, and engagement to set communities up for greater investments.
- The RCC program should allow for covering community costs to get people to the table, but also fund community incentives that make people want to get involved. Stipends and gift cards should be available for community members to receive training and attend meetings.
- Costs and time associated with applying to grants can be prohibitive to organizations. The RCC program should include funding to complete grant applications as well as provide enough time during the application process for organizations to build initial trust and relationships.

SGC has worked to incorporate this input into the draft guidelines of the RCC program. Moving forward, we are hoping for further feedback on these topics and reflections on how the RCC program can best meet these needs. SGC will be hosting a series of workshops to gather further input on the draft guidelines through February 2022. We deeply appreciate the time and wisdom contributed by all those who have joined and will continue to inform this new program.