



CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

To: California Strategic Growth Council Members
From: Erin Curtis, California Strategic Growth Council Executive Director
Re: **Executive Director Report to the Council – April 30, 2025**

Strategic Growth Council (SGC or the Council) Overview

Staffing Updates

- Natalie Obaldia is promoted to Strategic Engagement Specialist for SGC's Climate Change Research program.
- Mahima Ali joins as the Resilient Community Policy Associate for SGC's Health and Equity Program.
- Jennifer Kim, a beloved member of our Transformative Climate Communities team, has left SGC. We thank her for her service and wish her the best in future endeavors.

Highlights

- **Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities \$775 million Notice of Funding Opportunity:** On March 25, California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) released the program's Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). The NOFA release kicks off the application period. The Round 9 application workbook was released in conjunction with the NOFA on March 25. Applicants will have until May 28 to make their submissions for this round of the program.
- **Catalyst Convenings:** SGC and the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) co-hosted the first two regional Catalyst Convenings in late March. The events are a continuation of the commitments made at the 2023 and 2024 Catalyst Conferences. The Catalyst Convenings took place on March 25 in the San Diego region followed by the Los Angeles region on March 26. SGC Councilmember Nicole Capretz joined the San Diego convening and California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Deputy Secretary and SGC key staff member Noaki Schwartz attended the Los Angeles event. Additional events will be planned in the coming months.
- **Groundbreaking in Skid Row:** On March 13, SGC leadership and staff attended the Groundbreaking for Rosa's Place, an awarded project from Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Round 7 to expand housing at the Downtown Women's Center in Los Angeles. Rosa's Place will serve victims of domestic and gender violence, establishing 97 affordable homes. SGC Executive Director Erin Curtis spoke at the event along with representatives from the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH), the County of Los Angeles, and LA Council District 14.
- **Santa Barbara County Regional Climate Collaborative Spring Network Event:** The March 13 event was intended to explore high-impact priorities and celebrate the five-year anniversary of the collaborative. Special Advisor Adrienne Moretz presented on opportunities and changes with climate-related funding opportunities and Community

Resilience Centers staff member Jessica McCool participated on a panel where she discussed regional collaborations, landscape-scale solutions, and the ongoing development of the CRC program.

- **Imperial County BOOST Site Visit:** SGC Executive Director Erin Curtis joined California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) Secretary Yana Garcia, California Department of Health and Human Services (CalHHS) Secretary Kim Johnson, California Energy Commissioner Noemí Gallardo and State Water Resources Control Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel on April 9 in Imperial County to visit several state-funded project sites including the Jacaranda Gardens AHSC project, the Seeley fire station/cooling center, a meet-and-greet with community partners, and the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat project.
- **Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program celebrates permanent agricultural easement on 10,000-acre + working ranch in Merced and Mariposa counties:** A celebration was held on April 11 for the [Waltz-Turner Ranch](#) – a project to ensure more than 10,361-acres of working ranch lands bordering Merced and Mariposa Counties are permanently dedicated as agricultural lands through an \$8.7 million easement, ensuring grasslands, seasonal wetlands, and oak savannah provide adequate forage for sustainable agricultural production, while multiple wells, vernal springs, and stock ponds provide water to livestock and wildlife. The easement is part of SGC’s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program, offered in collaboration with the Department of Conservation (DOC).

Investment Program Updates

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Jessica Lopez, Marc Caswell, Shep Wilbun, Justin DeWaele, Brianne Logasa, Ella Manashil and HCD Staff Team

- The majority of the AHSC team attended the Housing California conference in early March. Staff attended sessions on homelessness policy, affordable housing development and finance, and housing as a climate strategy.
- SGC published NOFA supplemental materials for AHSC applicants throughout March. These include, but are not limited to, the anti-displacement assessment, narrative prompts and rubric, and climate matrix.
- HCD is hosting three NOFA workshops in mid-April, two in person and one virtual. The first in-person workshop will take place on April 15 at 10 a.m. in Los Angeles at the Weingart Towers. The second in-person workshop will take place on April 17 at 10 a.m. in Sacramento at the HCD headquarters. The virtual workshop will be held on April 23 at 10 a.m.
- On April 11, the groundbreaking for a Round 7 AHSC project, Dakota Affordable Housing Development, marked the end of the former Smugglers Restaurant and the start of



construction for the new affordable housing development in Fresno. The housing development will create 114 new affordable homes.

- On March 25, the AHSC team provided a presentation on AHSC with an emphasis on active transportation and transit to the clean mobility working group hosted by CALSTART, a state association made up of public and private transportation organizations.
- At the Dec. 2024 Council meeting, multiple parties voiced a desire for greater alignment of developer fee limits between the AHSC Round 8 Guidelines and the Tax Credit and Allocation Committee (TCAC). In response, Council made a request for staff to provide them with additional information on the subject. The resulting research led the AHSC team and partners to recommend an amendment to the Round 8 Guidelines, which will be reviewed by Council at the April 2025 Council meeting.
 - To note: the AHSC Round 9 Guidelines were updated to be in alignment with TCAC. Projects awarded under the Round 9 NOFA should find more compatible developer fee limits across the two funding sources.

Transformative Climate Communities Program (TCC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Nicole Cartwright, Jennifer Kim, Sarah Newsham, Jess Ison, Chynell Freeman, Noni Ifyefobi, Joyce Tse and DOC Staff Team

- Staff concluded the Post-Award Consultation process for all 11 grantees who were awarded a total of \$98.1 million during the Dec. 2023 Council Meeting. All grants have been executed.
- Staff continue to process advance pay requests and provide assistance for Round 4 and Round 5 grantees as authorized by AB 156 (2022), AB 590 (2023) and AB 3017 (2024). To date, staff have submitted five advance pay requests to LCI Accounts Payable.
- Staff has initiated work planning in anticipation of Proposition 4 funding, including coordination with the CRC and Extreme Heat programs.
- Staff continues development of Round 6 guidelines application and plans to include elements of the Better Funding model prepared by Civic Well.
- Staff have attended several site visits including:
 - Chynell Freeman attended a site visit for **Tranquility Resource Conservation District** in Fresno County, a Round 5 Planning Grant.
 - Noni Ifyefobi attended a site visit for **Urban Collaborative Project CDC**, a Round 5 Planning Grant.
 - Joyce Tse attended a site visit for **The Energy Coalition** in the City of Pomona, a Round 5 Implementation Grant.
 - Melinda Kelley attended a site visit for **Pajaro Valley**, a Round 4 Planning Grant.
 - Noni Ifyefobi attended a site visit for **Community Partners** in the City of South Los Angeles, a Round 5 Implementation Grant.
 - Joyce Tse attended a site visit for the **City of Riverside**, a Round 3 Implementation Grant.

- Staff also spoke at the following events:
 - March 19: Nicole Cartwright, Program Manager, spoke to the Marin Community Foundation Climate Justice Community of Practice on Infrastructure Solutions for a Resilient Community.
 - March 24: Nicole Cartwright attended California Climate Investments (CCI) Interagency Meeting for Programs Advancing the Climate Transition and presented TCC's evaluation framework with other CCI grant programs.
 - April 5: Noni Ifyefobi, Associate Planner, spoke at Urban Collaborative Project's 4th Annual Transportation Justice Expo.

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Shanna Atherton-Bauer DOC and DOC Staff

- Staff reported three easements closing between Feb. 7 and April 7. These projects have conserved 1,359 acres of grazing land and forestland in Santa Cruz and Placer counties.
- Between Feb. 7 and April 7, SALC staff submitted 30 invoices totaling \$5.03 million to DOC Accounting for payment. This includes three acquisition invoices, payments for associated costs related to acquisition transactions, payments for capacity and project work, and payments for planning work.

Climate Change Research Program (CCR)

Staff: Hoi-Fei Mok, Elizabeth Grassi and Natalie Obaldia

- The CCR team continues to lead the development and engagement efforts of California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment. SGC staff's efforts focused on the development of Fifth Assessment's 2025 Engagement Strategy.
- The team continues to close out the last three research contracts with University of California Office of the President, California State University's Water Advocacy Towards Education and Research, and UC Davis Center for Regional Change. This will officially close out the Climate Change Research program once completed.

Community Resilience Centers (CRC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Anna Jane Jones, Dora Monterroza, Jessica Cervantes, Jess McCool and Jin Zhang

- The CRC Program has successfully completed the execution of all eleven Round 1 Planning Grants.
- The CRC Program has also executed three Project Development Grants and four Round 1 Implementation Grants. The remaining six awardees, including one Project Development and five Implementation awards, are engaged in the Post-Award Consultation process and are set to be executed soon.
- Staff is working closely with SGC's TCC Program and other Extreme Heat Programs to research and develop better funding practices, develop an outreach and communications strategy, and align timelines in anticipation of Proposition 4 funding.

Community Assistance for Climate Equity (CACE)

Staff: Hoi-Fei Mok, Ena Lupine, Blanca Escobedo, Markie Price and Nancy Cheng

- **Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) Program:** Staff is working with the RCC Implementation Technical Assistance (TA) contractor team to plan for the remaining peer learning sessions for RCC grantees and partners. The TA team held a session on Policy Outreach, Education and Engagement on April 9 and the last virtual peer learning session is scheduled for July 8. Staff is also working with the TA team to plan an in-person RCC Fall Convening Oct. 1 – 2 in Rancho Cucamonga. This event will bring the grantees together one last time before the end of their grant terms in 2026 to share how they have built capacity in their respective regions and identify strategies to keep the collaboratives active after their grant term ends. Staff are also coordinating with the Great Communities Collaborative for a site visit to Marin Regional Collaborative in May.
- **Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program:** Staff submitted an amendment of \$50,000 for the TA Provider local assistance contract to increase funding for technical assistance services and in-person meetings and site visits with the grantees. The TA Provider team completed individual kick-off meetings with each grantee, including a needs assessment that outlines the tribes' priorities, objectives and goals for the grant term as well as their capacity building needs to better support them throughout the grant term. The TA team will facilitate the program's second peer learning session on April 12 to address common issues among the grantee cohort.
- **BOOST:** Staff submitted a local assistance contract of \$50,000 for Institute for Local Government to support TA to local governments in the Imperial Valley. Staff supported and attended multiple in-person meetings in Imperial Valley, including the Racial Equity Commission's engagement event and Commission meeting on March 19-20, Institute for Local Government's training for elected officials on March 21, CalEPA Border Relations Council on April 8, CalEPA site visits on April 9, and the Alianza Regional Roundtable on April 9.
- **Advance Pay:** Planning for the next interagency advance pay convening in May has commenced. Speakers from California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and SGC have been confirmed.

Collaborative Policy Initiatives

Health and Equity Program (HEP)

Staff: Hoi-Fei Mok, Fabián Pérez-Gove and Michael Jimenez

Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Staff: SGC partners with CDPH and the State of Equity to staff the HiAP Task Force. The Task Force brings together over 30 agencies, departments and commissions to integrate health into programs and policies that advance State priorities.

- **HiAP Evaluation and Key-Informant Interviews.** In March and April, HEP began an evaluation process for HiAP. HEP completed 10 interviews and shared a survey with the

entire Task Force. HEP is reviewing the responses and the findings will be used to identify priority topics and engagement efforts for the Task Force. HEP will use the findings to develop a short report to share the takeaways and recommendations on how to move forward.

- **HiAP Task Force hosted quarterly interagency convening.** On March 12, HEP and HiAP partners hosted the first HiAP Task Force Quarterly Meeting of 2025 for HiAP. Topics covered included the evaluation process, goals for 2025, the current structure and mission of each working group, and member updates. Attendees then joined breakout groups where staff led discussions on topics that HiAP should focus on in 2025, suggestions on engagement activities, and the value HiAP brings to members' work. Breakout room discussions will be used to supplement the survey and interview findings.
- **HiAP Hosts Safe & Equitable Communities Roundtable.** On April 17, HEP and State of Equity hosted a meeting of the HiAP Safe & Equitable Communities Roundtable with Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice. The Roundtable is part of the HiAP Task Force that focuses on public health and violence prevention. Topics covered at the Roundtable included a presentation from local leaders; a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats activity; "Snapshots of Innovation" highlighting stories from State employees; and a group discussion.
- **Transformative Leadership Cohort participation.** HEP and other SGC staff joined the Transformative Leadership Cohort, a seven-month training series for government employees on leading sustainable change within teams, collaborating with other public agencies, and engaging effectively with the public to better serve all Californians.
- **HEP welcomes new Resilient Community Policy Associate.** SGC welcomed Mahima Ali as the new Resilient Community Policy Associate. Mahima started her new role with HEP on April 21 and will focus on supporting the HiAP Task Force and increasing HEP communications and visibility with partners.

Capitol Collaborative on Race and Equity (CCORE)

Staff: SGC partners with the Public Health Institute's (PHI) State of Equity program to host a program for California State government institutions and employees to learn how to make government processes and resources more accessible and transparent. CCORE brings together agencies, departments, boards and offices to build a people-power movement inside of California State government.

- **CCORE Transformative Leadership Cohort – 2025**
 - CCORE's Transformative Leadership Cohort (TLC) is back in action for a second year. This cohort focuses on the experiences of government workers of various backgrounds over a period of 7 months. State and community organizations come together to learn how to help their departments become places where all staff feel welcomed. In March, TLC participants attended a 3-day, in-person workshop focused on using personal and professional experiences to better serve all Californians.

Natural and Working Lands

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

Staff: Sean Kennedy, Camille Frazier, Tessa Salzman and Caleb Swanson

- The seventh California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force meeting occurred on March 27 in Sacramento. The meeting focused on Task Force members' review and discussion their draft report. During the meeting, Task Force members created a subcommittee to learn about and discuss AB 524, a proposed bill that would create a new land access program at the Department of Conservation in consultation with the Agricultural Land Equity Task Force. The Subcommittee planned its first meeting for April 18.
- In March, staff convened introductory meetings with the Task Force Advisory Committee and the interagency review panel. The Task Force has requested the Advisory Committee provide feedback on the draft report for May, and the interagency review process will begin following the May meeting. The reviewers participating in these processes are serving in an advisory capacity and do not have decision-making authority. Staff will consolidate feedback received for review and discussion by Task Force members.
- In March, staff hosted three guest speakers in the newly established Insights on Agricultural Land Equity and Access Series. The series is virtual and open to the public. All presentations are recorded and viewable on SGC's YouTube channel. Staff are currently scheduling additional presentations for the coming months.
- Two Task Force subcommittees, the Grants & Resources Subcommittee and the Sustaining Natural & Cultural Resources Subcommittee, met in April. Members discussed updates on research requests and considered language from the draft report.
- The eighth Task Force meeting is scheduled for May 14 & 15 at the Susanville Indian Rancheria in Susanville, California. The Task Force members will review and discuss the revised draft report, meet with the Advisory Committee to discuss their feedback, hear an update on outreach and engagement activities, and consider options for the Task Force's final stages and work products. On May 13, the day prior to the Task Force meeting, members and staff will host a Tribal engagement session with California Native American Tribes in Northern California. Invitations were sent in March with follow up in April.

Federal Funding Initiatives

Connecting Communities

Staff: Adrienne Moretz and Aatisha Singh

- **Technical Assistance:** Connecting Communities is supporting SGC grant applicants and awardees who the Initiative supported to apply to and receive federal grant applications. The team is supporting communities with executed federal agreements to maintain grant compliance and is sharing available resources more broadly to communities who have submitted federal applications.

- **Catalyst Convenings:** SGC Connecting Communities team, with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, hosted the first two regional Catalyst Convenings in late March. The events are a continuation of the commitments made at the 2023 and 2024 Catalyst Conferences. The Catalyst Convenings took place on March 25, in the San Diego region followed by the Los Angeles region on March 26. Additional events will be planned in the coming months.

The goals of the Convenings are to:

- Understand the bioregion and explore specific regional issues
- Facilitate two-way conversations on climate, land use and energy
- Enable regions to have space to inform and co-create policies with actionable recommendations
- Create opportunities for state agencies and program teams to share funding, incentives, opportunities to engage, and other resources available to the region

SGC and LCI will be posting updates on SGCcatalyst.org, including event summaries and regional background reports.

LA Region

- [Convening Summary](#)
- [Regional Overview](#)

San Diego Region

- [Convening Summary](#)
- [Regional Overview](#)

Energy Investments

Factory-Built Housing (FBH) Pre-Development Pilot Program

Staff: Sean Kennedy and Kenna Davis

- The Factory-Built Housing Pre-Development Pilot Program went through two rounds of applications in Nov. of 2024 and Jan. of 2025. SGC received two applications during this time that did not meet the program's threshold requirements, and no funds were awarded.
- A Request for Information (RFI) was released from March 7 through March 28 to help collect public feedback on the state's factory-built housing landscape and how funding could be better used through this program.
- Staff will present a proposed amendment to the SGC resolution establishing the FBH Pilot Program to authorize use of the funds for purposes other than manufacturing facilities eligible for and pursuing federal funding, while still meeting the overarching program goals.



Proposition 4 - Climate Bond

- Proposition 4 – Climate Bond was approved by voters in Nov. 2024. In the bond, TCC and CRC are approved for legislative appropriation. TCC is authorized to receive up to \$150 million and CRC \$60 million. The Agricultural Land Equity Task Force is also named to work in consultation with DOC on the administration of \$30 million to improve land access and tenure for socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, tribal producers, and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- LCI and SGC are working closely with the Department of Finance (DOF), California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and the Governor’s Office (GO) as we progress through this budget year to develop the program funding rounds.
- SGC staff participated in several Legislative Budget hearings regarding Proposition 4.
- CNRA has kicked off working groups to build out certain reporting requirements. SGC staff are actively participating in the Climate Bond Core Team in a working group focused on vulnerable populations and tribal engagement.

News Media Clips

Climate Change Research

- [“Giving up gas? Here are 3 climate-friendly electric appliances.”](#) (NPR Morning Edition, March 19, 2025) Includes a conversation with CCR grantee Gradient Comfort about their window heat pump, an alternative to expensive HVAC retrofits.

Community Assistance for Climate Equity

- [“State leaders visit Imperial County’s Seeley Fire Station & Cooling Center | Local News | thedesertreview.com.”](#) (Desert Star Review, April 9, 2025) Describes a site visit by SGC council members and staff to a new fire station in the rural Imperial County community of Seeley that includes a new community center designed to serve as a cooling center during extreme heat events.

