PARTNERS
ADVANCING
CLIMATE
EQUITY

CALIFORNIA
STRATEGIC
GROWTH
COUNCIL

PACE

RECOMMENDATIONS
REPORT

JUNE 2022

Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE)

CAPACITY BUILDING WITH FRONTLINE COMMUNITY LEADERS:

BEST PRACTICES & RECOMMENDATIONS

CIVICWELL

Climate Resolve

UPISF

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE INNOVATION CENTER

THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PACE LEADERS

In its first year, Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE) convened a cohort of twenty-two incredible community leaders from across California. The program's first **multigenerational, multiregional, diverse, and committed cohort** primarily comprised individuals working in partnership with coalitions or at non-profit organizations that prioritize and uplift resident-led initiatives.

PACE Leaders worked on an array of issues at the intersection of climate and equity, including affordable housing, air quality, youth and resident empowerment, water and wildfire resilience, clean energy access, multi-modal mobility, and ecological restoration. Recognizing the variety of challenges faced by different frontline communities throughout California, the PACE Leaders represented coastal and inland Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley, the Central Coast, the Sacramento region, the Bay Area, and the North Coast and Sierras:

Amy J. Wong
ActiveSGV

Anita M. López
Cesar Chávez Service Clubs

Christian Torres
Comite Civico Del Valle

Christy Garcia
National Indian Justice Center

Danielle Dynes

East Oakland Collective

Fatima Malik

Del Paso Heights Growers' Alliance

Felipe Escobar

Pacoima Beautiful

ileana Ortega Brunetti

Watsonville Wetlands Watch

Irene Calimlim

Little Manila Rising

Jessa Calderon

Sacred Places Institute

Karina Andalon

Alianza

Lil Milagro Henriquez

Mycelium Youth Network

Marissa Fierro

California Indian
Environmental Alliance

Martha Armas-Kelley

Environmental Justice Project of
Catholic Charities in Modesto

Nancy Faulstich

Regeneración Pájaro Valley

Raymond Gutteriez

Wuksachi Indian Tribe

Red Cloud Manuel

Central Valley
Empowerment Alliance

Sarina Vega

Casa Familiar

Tere Almaguer

PODER SF

Veatrice Jews

Inland Empire Concerned African Churches

Victoria Vasquez

Sacramento Tree Foundation

Forever a part of PACE and in our hearts...

Felecia "Fe Love' Lenee Williams

Mar 30, 1980 – Mar 3, 2021
Co-Founder, Compassionate ARTS in Action

PACE PROJECT TEAM

PACE was collaboratively developed by an interdisciplinary team. Collectively, the team holds robust experience and expertise in curriculum development, technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, and facilitation, as well as in equity, climate change, and community resilience principles, policies, and practices.

California Strategic Growth Council

CivicWell

Climate Resolve

Urban Permaculture Institute

People's Climate Innovation Center

The Greenlining Institute

PACE Program Background

Communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income neighborhoods have been shaped and carved out by deliberate and exclusionary public policies of disinvestment and redlining. Frontline communities have borne the brunt of generational disparities in socioeconomic and health outcomes, and suffer "first and worst" from escalating climate impacts.[1] **Moreover, frontline communities not only suffer a disproportionate burden of pollution, poverty and inequities, but have also long been excluded from the decision-making processes that impact their lives and neighborhoods.**

Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE) is a State-funded capacity building pilot program developed to address these gaps.[2] Following the passage of SB-1072 (Leyva, 2018),[3] the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) developed the PACE program as its first step towards investing directly in the capacity of frontline communities. SGC partnered with a multidisciplinary team – CivicWell (formerly Local Government Commission), Climate Resolve, Urban Permaculture Institute (UPI), People's Climate Innovation Center (formerly Climate Innovation at Movement Strategy Center), and The Greenlining Institute – to develop and administer the program.

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[1] For the purposes of this program, the PACE Project Team defines frontline communities as historically marginalized communities that experience the first and worst consequences of climate change and other injustices. These include Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and other marginalized communities that have shouldered the largest health burdens and face the greatest economic barriers.

[2] Partners Advancing Climate Equity. https://partnersadvancingclimateequity.org/

[3] Regional climate collaboratives program: technical assistance, Cal. Public Resources Code § 71131(2018). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB1072

From February 2021 to March 2022, the PACE Project Team had the privilege of working alongside 22 incredible frontline community leaders—collectively referred to as the PACE Leaders—to learn together, tackle shared challenges, and develop community-driven visions and actionable strategies for improving climate equity.

PACE focuses on increasing the capacity of grassroots leaders to advance community-driven, equitable climate solutions.

The PACE program utilized a holistic approach to capacity building that included a variety of trainings and workshops, experiential learning, peer-to-peer connections, Community Needs Assessments Toolkits, 1:1 technical assistance, and more.

PACE CURRICULUM LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Leverage available resources to advance local climate resilience and social equity priorities

Create data-driven, community-led needs assessments and action plans

Form and sustain cross-sector partnerships that enhance collective impact

Navigate State funding programs, policies, and resources

Capacity Building as an Equity Strategy

Concurrently with the PACE program, California has made significant investments in building out the capacities of communities on the frontlines.[4] As California continues to rely on community-based, non-profit and Tribal organizations to advance local climate actions, the State has also recognized that these are the same communities that require additional capacity building. The State has therefore pursued several important capacity building strategies:

- The California Climate Investments Technical Assistance program offers technical assistance for grant application and implementation.[5]

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[4] SGC defines capacity building as "the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions grow, enhance, and organize their systems, resources, and knowledge." Strategic Growth Council. Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies. https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/cace/resources/guidelines/.

[5] California Climate Investments. Technical Assistance Program. https://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/t-a.

- SGC's Technical Assistance Guidelines offers best practices for State agencies developing effective technical assistance programs.[6]

- SGC manages both the PACE program (capacity building for frontline communities to develop community-led climate equity initiatives) and the BOOST program (capacity building for local governments to achieve their climate and equity goals).[7]

- In January 2022, SGC's Council voted on a resolution to advance capacity building as a key equity strategy.[8] The resolution commits the Council and each member agency to integrate concrete and measurable capacity building and technical assistance strategies, particularly for California Native American Tribes and under-resourced communities, into their agencies' programs, policies and practices.

PACE's own experience makes clear the demand for continued investments in capacity building programs, particularly programs that center frontline community members. For the pilot year, the program was only able to select 22 PACE Leaders from a total of 151 applications received.

The high number of applicants reveals that many community-based organizations (CBOs), non-profit organizations and Tribal governments lack easy access to technical assistance or external resources. As a result of this gap, frontline community leaders are eager for opportunities to leverage their expertise, build meaningful connections, and learn new skills. PACE Leaders have overwhelmingly shared that they hope the PACE program will continue into the future to continue to narrow this gap.

Report Purpose & Methodology

As the Council and member agencies advance capacity building strategies, the lessons learned from the pilot year of the PACE program offer valuable insights into future capacity building programs as well as overall State policies. **PACE's pilot year provides a rare opportunity for ground-truthing[9]** and identifying capacity building best practices,

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[6] Strategic Growth Council. Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies. https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/cace/resources/guidelines/.

[7] Institute for Local Government. BOOST Program. https://www.ca-ilg.org/boost-program.

[8] Strategic Growth Council. Attachment A: California Strategic Growth Council's Resolution on Advancing Capacity Building as a Key Equity Strategy. https://sgc.ca.gov/meetings/council/2022/docs/20220126-Item7_Priority2_Resolution.pdf.

[9] Namati Innovations in Legal Empowerment. Ground Truthing: A Note on Methodology. https://namati.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Groundtruthing-methodology-note.pdf.

structural challenges faced by frontline communities, and recommendations for State programs and policies.

The PACE Project Team compiled this report based on insights and feedback shared by PACE Leaders. The Project Team is grateful to the PACE Leaders for sharing their expertise, critiques and powerful solutions-focused thinking. The following sources were referred to most frequently in developing this report:

- Discussion notes and feedback from PACE workshops
- PACE Leader Technical Assistance Work Plans
- Discussion notes from check-in calls with PACE Leaders
- Quarterly evaluations from PACE Leaders
- Bi-monthly progress reports submitted by the PACE Project Team

Key Takeaways

This report offers three overarching sets of takeaways—based on the experiences and learnings of PACE's pilot year—to support and shape future State capacity building programs and investments.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS: BEST PRACTICES

For PACE's pilot year, the Project Team developed the program's design and underlying infrastructure, including new partnerships, project management tools, curriculum, resources, facilitation guides, templates and more.

The included program design best practices are offered to support the development of future capacity building programs that are **grounded in meeting the needs of frontline communities**.

FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES: CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

PACE Leaders led on powerful community-driven solutions, while at the same struggling against significant structural barriers: fragmented ecosystems, capacity gaps at both the individual and organizational level, and the need for increased resources, skills, technical expertise and connections. Moving forward, it is critical that future State programs **address the unique challenges faced by frontline communities**.

This report offers observations and recommendations for capacity building and grant programs to better **support the overall capacity of grassroots leaders**.

STATE PRACTICES: CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

PACE Leaders were eager to leverage public policies and funding to engage residents, advance campaigns and implement capital projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the social determinants of health in their neighborhoods. However, many PACE Leaders—especially those representing CBOs and Indigenous groups—faced challenges accessing State policymaking and investments.

Based on the experience of the PACE program, this report offers recommendations on **how State programs, policies and guidelines can be made more accessible** to CBOs, non-profit organizations and Tribal governments.

Conclusion

Frontline leaders across California are advancing local climate solutions grounded directly in the needs and visions of neighborhood residents.

Capacity building programs like PACE can support those visions to reach their full potential. Investing in community capacity is thus an important investment in the State of California meeting its overall climate goals, as well as its commitments to our most vulnerable areas.

Ribbon-cutting ceremony for first EV charger at Comite Civico. Part of the #First40 initiative to launch a network of 40 public EV chargers in the Imperial Valley.
*Christian Torres, Comite Civico*

PACE Program Background

Communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income neighborhoods have been shaped and carved out by deliberate and exclusionary public policies of disinvestment and redlining. Frontline communities have borne the brunt of generational disparities in socioeconomic and health outcomes, and suffer "first and worst" from escalating climate impacts.

Moreover, frontline communities not only suffer a disproportionate burden of pollution, poverty and inequities, but have also long been excluded from the decision-making processes that impact their lives and neighborhoods.

PACE PROGRAM MODEL

Launching a new cycle of capacity building and community empowerment

4. ACTIVATE — Entrust communities to advance their priorities with improved partnerships and access to resources

1. CULTIVATE — Bring together frontline community leaders to build skills and networks

2. CO-CREATE — Develop actionable community visions for climate resilience and social equity

3. PROPAGATE — Equip community leaders to train network partners and local ecosystems

Partners Advancing Climate Equity (PACE) is a capacity-building program for frontline community leaders from across California to connect and learn with peers, take their skills to the next level, and catalyze transformative change. In its pilot year, the program focused on increasing
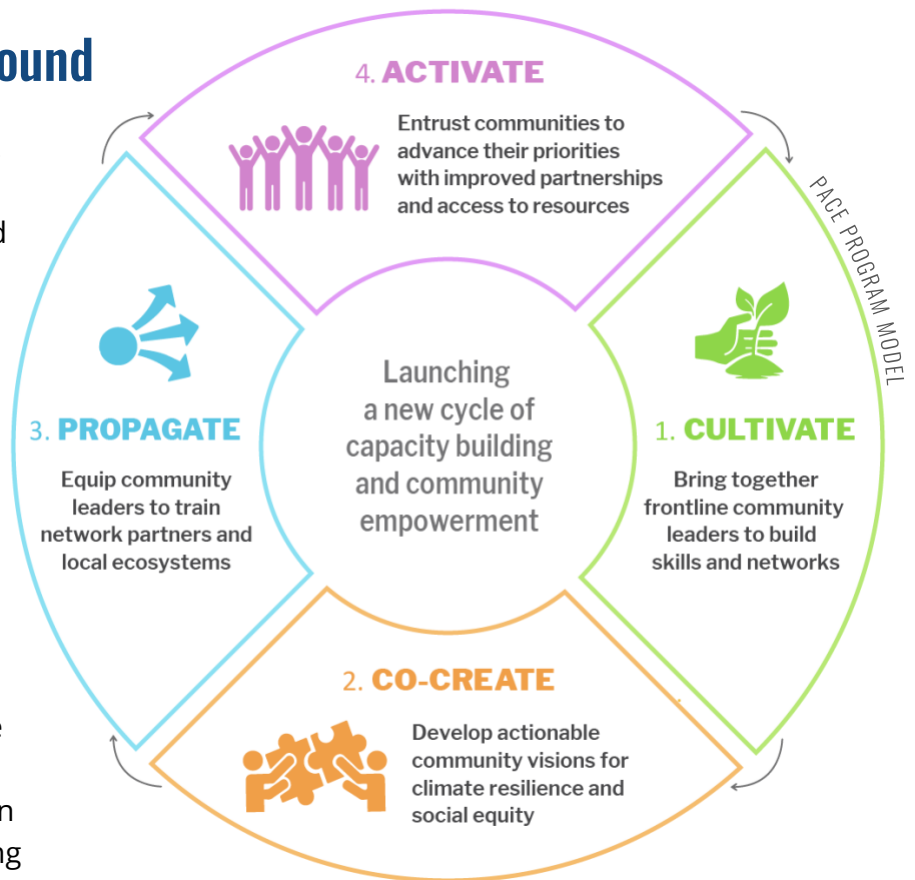
the capacities of leaders in California's communities to advance community-driven, equitable climate solutions at the pace and scale demanded by climate change and ongoing injustices.

The PACE program consisted of two phases: 6 months of virtual workshops and activities to develop skills and create Community Needs Assessments, followed by 6 months of 1:1 technical assistance for greater support on project development. The PACE Curriculum advanced **four primary capacity-building objectives for participants to**:

Leverage available resources to advance local climate resilience and social equity priorities	Create data-driven, community-led needs assessments and action plans
Form and sustain cross-sector partnerships that enhance collective impact	Navigate State funding programs, policies, and resources

At its core, PACE aimed to shift power to frontline communities to lead the development of equitable, climate-resilient community solutions and shape State priorities and programs.

The program's vision was to create a connected and mutually supportive network of emboldened community leaders with the capacity, partnerships, and drive to facilitate and catalyze local climate action. This vision is based on a belief that collective liberation can be achieved by enabling communities to determine their own paths to climate resilience.

As a pilot program, **PACE strived to replace existing extractive models with a new, self-replicating model centered around community** that fundamentally shifts interactions between community-based organizations (CBOs), government, and other institutions to restore community decision-making power. The program was grounded in the following values.

Honoring, uplifting and growing community leadership and knowledge

Building authentic, symbiotic relationships for meaningful collaboration

Full transparency and collaborative governance every step of the way

Courage to address root causes rather than pursuing simple solutions

Respect and care for participants' time and capacity

Shifting and restoring community power to enable self-determination and liberation

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS: BEST PRACTICES & RECOMMENDATIONS

For PACE's pilot year, the Project Team developed the program's design and underlying infrastructure, including new partnerships, project management tools, curriculum, resources, facilitation guides, templates and more. The program design best practices below are offered to support the development of future capacity building programs.

1 ▶ Build the Team & Develop Collaborative Governance Systems

To develop the PACE program, first the team and the underlying infrastructure had to be constructed. **PACE's pilot year was collaboratively implemented by six key partners**, each of whom brought a unique set of strengths and skills to successfully design and deliver the program:

- **California Strategic Growth Council**, a cabinet-level State organization dedicated to thriving communities for all, served as the administering agency and advised on all aspects of the program.

- **CivicWell**, a nonprofit supporting sustainable solutions, served as the overall project manager. CivicWell led the development of the cohort selection process, the Community Needs Assessment Toolkit, technical assistance strategy and evaluation strategy.

- **Climate Resolve**, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit advancing local solutions to climate change, led key responsibilities such as outreach and recruitment, communications and logistics support and external advisor coordination.

- **Urban Permaculture Institute**, a worker-owned collective uplifting community-led initiatives, led overall curriculum development and facilitation.

- **People's Climate Innovation Center**, an organization supporting vibrant community-driven movements across the country, advised on all aspects of program design and delivery.

- **The Greenlining Institute**, a racial justice policy and advocacy organization, advised on all aspects of program design and delivery.

Together, the PACE Project Team worked through a set of **ground-setting activities to establish a shared vision and collaborative governance structure** for the program. The PACE Team developed shared values, program goals and definitions, decision-making and conflict resolution protocols, and project management tools and procedures. This process created an efficient and strong foundation for collaborative governance, as well as fostered relationship building and trust within the team.

This internal governance and communication architecture then allowed the PACE Team to make responsive decisions related to the PACE Leaders. Managing a multi-phase program across six organizations could have turned into a logistical quagmire, but the project management and collaborative governance systems supported clear decision-making. Once the program launched, the Project Team was able to provide organized and competent support to PACE Leaders.

Based on the experiences of PACE participants, any program that centers equity and collaborative governance must ensure that their internal team and underlying systems are similarly aligned towards equity and collaboration.

2 ► Center Community Expertise & Solutions

Community knowledge and lived experiences are valuable. Frontline communities hold a vast amount of knowledge on climate change and the intersecting issues that impact them, as well as the community-led solutions that can help guard against those impacts. At the same time, **community voices are rarely centered in the decision-making processes that impact their daily lives**. In such cases, decisions are made without community buy-in or participation, projects are funded that don't accurately reflect community needs, and the implementation of overall policies and investments often leads to worsening rather than diminishing inequities.

To advance equitable outcomes, capacity building programs must start by centering community expertise, leadership and solutions.

As an example, **PACE structured its program design with frontline community leaders as its focus**—from participant selection to curriculum development to program delivery.

TAILORED OUTREACH

The Project Team conducted a wide-reaching, multipronged outreach strategy that prioritized historically marginalized communities and accessibility throughout the application process. PACE centered those directly serving frontline communities by honoring and uplifting existing leadership, lived experiences, and place-based local expertise.

PARTICIPANT STIPENDS

PACE Leaders received up to $8,000 to support their time commitment and participation. SGC identified and secured external funding for the stipends, which were then administered through Climate Resolve, a non-profit organization. PACE Leaders were appreciative of the stipend support. However, many reflected that they committed more time to the PACE program than initially anticipated (that PACE program advertised a time commitment of 10-15 hours/month), and that a higher stipend amount would be necessary to fairly compensate participants for their time.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED CURRICULUM

PACE's Curriculum followed the VAST framework, an iterative design process created by the Urban Permaculture Institute. The VAST framework connects community visions with climate change issues, starting with community priorities and leading to community-led implementation plans:

- **Vision**: Develop explicit, aligned, and collective goals that tap into cultural identity and values while fostering meaningful relationships.

- **Assessment**: Deepen understanding of community needs by gathering an inventory of existing conditions.

- **Strategy**: Develop a menu of possible solutions that are tailored to community needs and utilize a multi-benefit approach.

- **Timeline**: Identify near-term priorities and develop plans for implementing solutions.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

PACE Leaders developed Community Needs Assessments (CNA) to identify actionable strategies to advance their community's vision for climate equity. In contrast to traditionally deficit-based ways of understanding a community, the CNA guided PACE Leaders through a process that considered community strengths and assets as essential foundations from which any change should take root. A key aspect of the CNA was to establish a clear community vision, one that was informed by the community in focus.

"TRAIN-THE-FACILITATOR"

PACE followed a "train-the-facilitator" model that integrates experiential learning and sharing resources. The goal was for PACE Leaders to be able to replicate their learnings in their own communities to facilitate further capacity building and collective action.

INDIVIDUALIZED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

PACE provided 1:1 technical assistance and follow-up mentorship calls with external advisors. This allowed for deeper support and relationship building, tailored to the immediate goals, strategies and needs of the PACE Leaders.

Capacity building programs should be designed so that the needs and priorities of frontline communities are at the center, every step of the way. This can look like offering additional resources to support community leaders to achieve their goals, while also making space to learn from communities about the structural barriers standing in the way of their success.

Based on PACE's pilot year, the State should also identify ways to engage with frontline communities early and often in the development of programs and policies.

Moreover, the State should fund strategies that require community members to be part of the solutions, as opposed to merely a downstream beneficiary.

Such an approach would build stronger, more trusting relationships with frontline communities, while improving State programs to best serve all Californians.

3 ▸ Layer Capacity Building Strategies for Multiple Learning Styles

The PACE program layers a variety of approaches to build the capacity of frontline community leaders.

APPROACH	PHASE 1	PHASE 2
SESSIONS & TRAININGS	• Bi-weekly Full Cohort Sessions • Bi-weekly Small Learning Group Sessions • Supplemental Trainings (optional) • Peer Learning Exchanges (optional) • Office hours 2x / week (optional)	• Bi-Weekly 1:1 Technical Assistance • Monthly Full Cohort Sessions • Peer Learning Exchanges *(optional)* • Mentorship Calls with External Technical Assistance Providers *(optional)*
RESOURCES	• Curriculum Workbook • Community Needs Assessment Toolkit • Resource Library	• Technical Assistance Work Plans • Resource Library • Project Management Templates

Designing shared learning experiences and timely, relevant, equitable support for a diverse set of leaders required a balancing act. The PACE Leaders **each represent unique local circumstances, organizational structures, individual learning styles, level of familiarity/readiness, and more**. A layered framework—combining a structured program, independent work, smaller group meetings, peer learning and 1:1 technical assistance—allowed the PACE Project Team to meet multiple learning styles and needs.

For example, PACE Leaders shared a desire to participate in various ways. Some PACE Leaders loved the small group interactions, while others identified the most value in the full group workshops. Many Leaders have also voiced a desire to dive deeper into subject areas and address other relevant topics.

Future capacity building programs should consider the importance of layering different kinds of technical assistance strategies to best meet the needs of diverse groups and participants.

4 ▶ Build in Adaptive Practices to Meet Community Needs

Capacity building programs should be adaptive, responding directly to community needs. The PACE Project Team developed an extensive underlying infrastructure and curriculum, but was also able to be **responsive to changing circumstances and priorities**. The Project Team utilized check-in calls and evaluation surveys to better understand what kinds of content would be most useful to the PACE Leaders, and then pivoted our curriculum content and delivery methods to meet the needs and dynamics of the cohort in real-time.

As an example, some PACE Leaders expressed confusion about the program's expectations, as well as concerns regarding the time needed to develop the CNAs. The Project Team dedicated more time at Full Cohort Sessions to review CNA expectations, created an FAQ document, and clarified expectations to enable flexible approaches to developing CNAs.

The PACE program also made **space to address emergent challenges**. Leading up to the second Full Cohort Session, the Project Team was informed of the sudden passing of a PACE Leader, Felecia "Fe Love" Lenee Williams. Plans for the full cohort session and the following week's learning group sessions were adapted to provide space for grieving and healing. Project Team members discussed opportunities to engage Compassionate ARTS in Action, the organization that Fe Love co-founded, and facilitated discussions with the cohort to identify ways in which the program could honor Fe Love.

> "
> The horizontal leadership and collaborative spirit of learning from each other was a highlight. Empathetic leadership showed up in the flexibility the team had for Leaders, in the weekly reminders, and the generosity given to us. It was important during pandemic times.
>
> **PACE LEADER**
> "

Emergent community needs, priorities and visions will inevitably arise, and capacity building programs must be responsive to changing real world conditions.

Adaptive management practices,[10] or simply remaining flexible and open in program design and execution, are critical qualities to any capacity building program.

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[10] Adaptive management is a structured, iterative process of robust decision-making in the face of uncertainty. Adaptive management practices were originally applied to the management of natural resources, and has begun to be implemented in international development contexts. USAID. (2021). Discussion Note: Adaptive Management. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/dn_adaptive_management_final2021.pdf.

5 > # Provide 1:1 Technical Assistance for Individualized Support

In Phase 2 of the PACE program, **each PACE Leader was matched with a PACE Team member who serves as their technical assistance (TA) liaison**. Together, the PACE Leader and their Team Liaison co-developed a TA work plan, which was specifically tailored to address the needs and aspirations of that individual Leader. PACE Leaders received mentorship, guidance and customized project support to advance priorities identified in their CNAs and build long-term capacity to achieve their community's vision for climate equity.

The one-on-one (1:1) TA check-ins provided each participant with the opportunity to receive **individualized guidance and mentorship**, identify additional technical assistance requests, and share about their priorities. Team Liaisons provided both support and accountability, pushing the PACE Leaders to tackle the goals they identified. Moreover, providing 1:1 assistance was an effective way to help Leaders build knowledge and capacity, as it allows for robust discussions on the specific challenges that the individual is encountering.

The 1:1 technical assistance also enabled the Project Team to better understand needs, gaps or challenges emerging from the cohort. For example, by engaging more deeply with individual PACE Leaders, the Project Team was able to determine how to best organize cohort sessions, diagnose cohort-wide gaps to address, identify external advisors to bring in, and more.

PACE TEAM VISION FOR PHASE 2

The individualized technical assistance provided through PACE will help each PACE Leader build capacity to become effective drivers of change. The capacity built will not start and end with the cohort –it will extend to their organizations, partners, and communities.

PACE Leaders will confidently communicate their climate equity visions with partners and use their Community Needs Assessments as tools for elevating community needs, expanding and deepening partnerships, building network capacity, and catalyzing collective impact.

By the end of Phase 2, each PACE Leader will be mobilizing stakeholders around a shared vision. They will be working in collaboration with their partners to advance climate equity priorities by forming coalitions, engaging decision-makers and funders, creating enabling environments, and conceptualizing a pipeline of collective impact projects.

Future capacity building programs should consider the impact and importance of 1:1 touch points, including coaching and direct TA.

While 1:1 engagement is more resource-intensive, PACE's experience shows how valuable direct TA is in supporting participants through strategy development and execution, project management and more. Such 1:1 TA is often best facilitated by a trusted third-party entity, rather than State agency staff.

6 ▶ Structure Peer-to-Peer Learning to Leverage Community Expertise

Creating **consistent opportunities and spaces for peer-to-peer learning** is a central tenet of the PACE program. PACE Leaders brought a wealth of experience, expertise, and knowledge that other participants benefited from and highlighted as one of the most valuable aspects of the program–to build camaraderie, feel solidarity with frontline community leaders from throughout the state, share ideas, and connect in an authentic way. While difficult to quantify, these types of activities are an important component of a successful and engaging cohort model.

Many participants reported finding significant value in learning about the work of other PACE Leaders and sharing ideas. The topics covered in the PACE curriculum were complex, and scheduled sessions often did not provide sufficient time to cover all topics in great detail. However, participants expressed appreciation for having time to discuss equity topics with their peers in smaller group settings as these types of opportunities are not regularly available. Nearly all the PACE Leaders have expressed desire for more time for peer networking and to deeply connect and co-work with each other.

PACE Leaders also volunteered to lead Peer Learning Exchanges, sharing learnings on topics such as: storytelling, Spanish terminology, youth organizing, mindful and aligned practices, advocacy and coalition building, facilitation, and tool demonstrations.

PACE Leaders have been able to form deep connections across the cohort, moving into a space of creative brainstorming and visioning. The cohort has shifted from a mindset of scarcity and competition with one another over available funding (as community groups are often competing for the same resources), to one of **sharing, maximizing, and advocating for collective, community-wide goals**. PACE Leaders have reflected that peer-to-peer learning has provided the following benefits.

SPACE FOR BUILDING INDIVIDUAL CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER LEADERS WHO SHARE SIMILAR PASSIONS AND WORK

Leaders described the PACE program as a "meeting of the minds," a safe and shared space to explore climate equity in depth. Participants were able to share freely and grow both professionally and personally.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM DIVERSE COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE STATE

PACE Leaders shared and learned from each other's challenges and successes. Participants reported that it was eye-opening to hear about the struggles that

different communities face, many of which are both similar to and different from their own. It was then invaluable to tackle strategies and solutions from a variety of perspectives, from a place of shared listening and learning rather than competition.

SENSE OF SOLIDARITY AND BEING PART OF A LARGER MOVEMENT

PACE Leaders reported feeling like they are part of a statewide network of community leaders dedicated to climate justice, and that they have felt inspired and motivated to be part of a broader movement. For a field that can be emotionally draining at times, the PACE program provided a forum that helped rejuvenate Leaders' energy and willpower.

ONGOING CONNECTIONS BEYOND THE PACE PROGRAM

PACE's peer-to-peer learning opportunities led to ongoing engagement between many PACE Leaders outside of scheduled program activities. For example, PACE Leaders from different geographies have consulted each other for technical expertise and collaborated on joint grant applications. Moreover, multiple PACE Leaders have engaged in other cohort models to continue learning, capacity building and advancing community-led priorities (e.g., UC Davis Environmental Justice Fellowship,[11] Community Resilience Working Group, Shift Health Accelerator Investment Committee[12]).

Moving forward, State-funded capacity building programs should emphasize peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities as much as possible.

Further, programs that fund specific initiatives should also consider building in peer learning as a way to elevate best practices and build capacity along the way.

7 ▸ Support Local Leaders to Strengthen the Collective

The PACE Program focused on building the capacity of individual grassroots leaders from across California, but with a clear intention to support local leaders and maximize their coalition and collective impact work. PACE invested in individual grassroots leaders to build

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[11] UC Davis. 2022 UC Davis Environmental Justice Fellowship. https://policyinstitute.ucdavis.edu/node/221.

[12] Shift Health Accelerator. Our Approach. http://shifthealthaccelerator.org/tools/.

capacity within their individual organizations, their wider coalitions and ultimately their broader communities.

Longer-term community and coalition building has therefore been a key benefit of PACE's model of capacity building. PACE Leaders applied the train-the-facilitator model to bring skills back to their communities and engage in deeper partnership and coalition development. Many Leaders are using participatory models, such as participatory action research, participatory grantmaking, or youth-led Community Needs Assessments, to support resident-led visioning and planning. They are investing in their relationships with each other as their greatest resource, and creating spaces for shared community priorities to emerge. This community and coalition building framework then serves as the foundation for inclusive and community-led plans.

Frontline communities need capacity building support at all levels, in order to build community-wide visions, projects and campaigns.

Based on PACE's experiences, capacity building efforts that offer support across multiple scales (e.g., support for individuals, organizational development and coalition strategy) and with an eye towards collective impact are the most effective.

8 ▸ Tie Capacity Building to Implementation

PACE Leaders were eager to engage in the capacity building work in order to inform and strengthen the implementation of strategies that lead to tangible improvements for their communities. Over the course of the program, PACE Leaders learned new skills and approaches, developed CNAs, engaged in peer-to-peer learning, and received technical assistance.

The purpose of these capacity building activities was ultimately to support the development of skills and partnerships that would lead directly to the implementation of community-proposed initiatives.

The PACE Curriculum guides participants to develop a menu of possible community-identified priorities, solutions and plans for implementation. The goal for the CNAs was to provide the Leaders with an opportunity to reflect on community needs and priorities, identify a community vision, and align that vision to funding opportunities.

Many PACE Leaders were most excited to hone in on solutions, develop plans of action, and come together to leverage funding opportunities to meet community needs. The

following list provides a sample of some of the **strategies PACE Leaders are advancing to build more resilient neighborhoods**.

- Local workforce development and employment opportunities in climate equity projects
- Creating meaningful connections between Tribal groups and outside community-based organizations
- Advocating for community benefits agreements and inclusive governance structures
- Building intersectional coalitions bridging health, environmental justice, and labor
- Affordable housing and small business cooperatives
- Inclusive zoning policies and investments in multi-modal transportation options
- Circular economies that are less extractive and reduce waste
- Building acquisition to develop a Community Development Corporation
- Reliable and affordable back-up power solutions
- Ecological restoration for a thriving natural world

Future capacity building programs should be structured to ensure that the outcome of the capacity building is clearly identified strategies and opportunities for implementation of projects.

Capacity building, community engagement and planning activities must ultimately be tied to implementation. Moreover, as PACE Leaders build capacity, the State should also build readiness to connect community-led strategies with available resources. The PACE Leaders have dreams and visions ranging from community land trusts to distributed clean energy and much more. Future policy priorities and funding decisions should be responsive to these community-identified needs.

> " Both in my professional and personal life, the PACE program has taught me so many valuable skills, provided resources, templates, knowledge, tools, networks, and connections that will help me for a lifetime. The model itself is amazing and I will continue to apply and replicate it in my work and community.
>
> **PACE LEADER**

9 ▶ Invest in a Long-Term Capacity Building Strategy

Many PACE Leaders expressed interest in staying connected after the program ended, and hoped that the program would continue for future cohorts. It is critical that capacity building programs with set end dates devise a **transition plan** that aims to help participants ramp down, access similar support through other channels, and utilizes other creative strategies for sustaining the connections and progress made during the program.

Moreover, it is important to consider how participant engagement and cohort connectivity can be sustained and supported beyond the program itself.

Capacity building is not a short-term intervention, but an ongoing investment in strengthening skills, leadership, and partnerships so that frontline communities can meet their own needs.

Capacity building is thus a long-term endeavor that requires continued investments and support, particularly for organizations and leaders already facing severe capacity constraints. That is equity in practice.

Moving forward, the State should identify opportunities for long-term investment in capacity building that expands on the PACE program. The State should also identify ways to integrate capacity building as a strategy across all programmatic efforts to ensure that frontline communities are empowered to move their visions to implementation.

Youth harvesting vegetables at a local school in Pacoima
Felipe Escobar, Pacoima Beautiful

FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES: CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Community-based organizations and frontline leaders serve their communities, acting as critical stewards of community needs and advancing State climate priorities at the grassroots level. At the same time, frontline communities, by definition, sit on the frontlines of climate impacts and other inequities.

The PACE Leaders embody this challenging duality. They are leading on creative community-driven solutions, while at the same struggling against significant barriers: fragmented political ecosystems, severe capacity gaps at both the individual and organizational level, and the need for increased resources, skills, technical expertise and connections.

Moving forward, it is critical that future State programs address the unique challenges faced by frontline communities and community leaders. Supporting the overall capacity of grassroots leaders supports the ability of local communities to address their own needs and push forward the State's overarching goals on climate.

1 ▶ Frontline Leaders Contend with Hostile Political Conditions

PACE Leaders not only organized residents, built partnerships and managed services, programs and campaigns, but they also actively contended with challenging political ecosystems.

Many frontline community leaders are advocating for their communities precisely because local institutional power is either disengaged from or hostile to community-led initiatives.

PACE Leaders have expressed that local elected officials and city governments are often aligned with moneyed interests or industry, do not center climate or racial justice, and are typically not accustomed to engaging or partnering with community members in a meaningful, non-tokenizing way. In other cases, local governments themselves suffer from a lack of capacity and are often unable to allocate staff time to work on collaborative projects.

To support community-led decision-making amidst fragmented political ecosystems, State agencies can support local governments to meaningfully engage residents, partner with community-based groups and participate in more collaborative processes.

The State can raise the bar by providing **robust equity guidance and standards**, leveraging program design and guidelines to influence local and regional governments to better operationalize equity. State agencies can also intervene on a case-by-case basis where stakeholders report challenging partnership dynamics. We offer additional details on this recommendation in the section on "State Practices."

Moreover, the State can also **directly invest in building the capacity of local governments**, such as through the BOOST program.[13] SGC manages both BOOST and PACE, supporting both local governments and community leaders to advance equitable climate projects.

2 ▶ Capacity Building Requires Capacity

Capacity building efforts often face a paradox: building capacity requires existing capacity. Even while the PACE program is focused on building capacity, PACE Leaders have nonetheless struggled with capacity constraints. A base level of capacity is needed for community leaders to invest time into activities such as strategic planning or partnership development that can help to build longer-term capacity.

CBOs are chronically under-resourced and overburdened, challenged by the overwhelming amount of community needs that must be addressed.

Many PACE Leaders lack adequate staffing and compress multiple job responsibilities onto a single staff member. Staff are therefore responsible for understanding everything from local climate impacts to navigating policy opportunities, while engaging residents,

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[13] Institute for Local Government. BOOST Program. https://www.ca-ilg.org/boost-program.

advocating for their communities, managing programs and seeking out new grant funding. For example, several of the PACE Leaders represented organizations who pivoted to 2020 Census outreach and COVID-19 response when needed, even though those activities were not originally part of their organization's scope. This is because CBOs are, by definition, community-serving.

Many of the PACE Leaders also personally faced the same challenges they were trying to address through their work. **Frontline community leaders themselves exist on the frontlines** and experience multiple layers of trauma, juggling community work in addition to health and family care.[14] The Leaders identified that some of the challenges they personally faced that restricted their ability to fully engage in the work included: housing insecurity, health inequities and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, insufficient water access and more.

These severe capacity constraints have limited the ability of numerous PACE Leaders to fully participate in the program. For example, some Leaders have struggled to attend the Full Cohort Sessions or participate in regular technical assistance check-in calls. Some have also expressed challenges in finding time after cohort sessions to reflect and put learnings into practice in a strategic manner.

To address capacity constraints, the PACE Project Team approached program administration with empathy and compassion while exploring creative solutions to deliver meaningful outcomes for the Leaders. We designed Phase 2 to include more time for 1:1 peer connections, just a handful of mandatory sessions, and individualized support around their CNAs and other technical assistance needs. We also offered greater clarity on the required deliverables and time commitment. Lastly, PACE offered $8,000 participation stipends to compensate the Leaders for the significant time commitment and expertise.

> " The program was built by a really responsive team, it adapted to meet Leaders' needs. Even though I was facing challenges, there wasn't pressure to feel like I was failing. There were also opportunities for folks to be called in, which was generative and supportive. That strong baseline of support was really felt. "
>
> **PACE LEADER**

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[14] To respond to the interacting layers of trauma experienced by frontline communities, it is important that capacity building programs utilize a trauma-informed. RYSE Center. Interacting Layers of Trauma and Healing. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55788387e4b042afe8e6dc56/t/5eaafc5cb0caa85f5c64a989/1588264028939/Ryse+Interacting+Layers+of+Trauma+and+Healing%2C+2017.pdf.

As the State invests in deeper capacity building:

- Agencies should **approach frontline communities with understanding and empathy**, acknowledging that many grassroots leaders are personally impacted by the same issues as the community they are serving. Such a mindset shift would account for the material realities experienced by frontline leaders, and could lead to structural changes in program design and administration.

- Agencies should **critically consider equity considerations as well as capacity limitations** during grantee or applicant selection, program or curriculum design, and required deliverables.

- Future programs should consider providing 1:1 technical assistance throughout the program lifecycle to **offer participants individualized support**.

- **Participant stipends** must be offered in order to ensure the full and robust participation of grassroots leaders.

3 ▸ Grassroots Organizations Struggle with Organizational Sustainability & Development

While PACE was developed to build capacity for leaders to advance climate-specific solutions, we learned that CBOs, Tribal governments and Native-led organizations also desperately need capacity building on general organizational sustainability and development. Many small CBOs and non-profit organizations chronically struggle with fiscal solvency and cash flow issues because they are reliant on project-based public grants that provide reimbursement-based payments, and are not able to access general operating support or philanthropic dollars.

Over the course of the PACE program, several of our Leaders went through periods of acute organizational crisis. Some organizations, for example, reported **consistent delays in payment from public grants** that threatened their ability to stay afloat and pay their staff. Others faced situations where they were unsure whether they would receive additional funding beyond the project grant term to continue their work. Some organizations also experienced periods of **rapid change or growth**, and struggled to manage that growth
while remaining fiscally solvent. In these circumstances, the PACE Leaders were understandably not able to focus on specific climate strategies, but were instead preoccupied with keeping the lights on, fundraising and retaining staff.

As the State pursues action on commitments to build capacity for frontline leaders, PACE's experience shows that **capacity building must include general organizational sustainability and development**. CBOs, non-profit organizations and Tribal governments need deeper supports to build internal resilience and grow.

The following recommendations are offered as guidance for how different stakeholders can support the capacity and organizational sustainability of CBOs.

> "
> Before PACE, we had $0 because we did not have a fiscal sponsor or the confidence, capacity, or skills to apply for state grants. We have now received our first state grant and a few local grants and contracts as a result of this program.
>
> **PACE LEADER**
> "

STATE PROGRAMS & GRANTS

Many State grants are not tailored to be accessible to or meet the needs of smaller CBOs, non-profit organizations or Tribal governments. State grants must offer more **upfront, ongoing and flexible funding**. We offer additional details in the section "Public Funding Must Be Flexible, Ongoing & Democratized."

PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy must **shift funding to the frontlines and offer general operating support**. Philanthropy can provide the critical resources needed to support the long-term capacity building, organizing and planning needs of grassroots communities, as well as the general operating needs of non-profit organizations. Yet the philanthropic sector still overwhelmingly funds mainstream environmental or conservation work and many frontline communities struggle to access philanthropic resources.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS

Capacity building programs must plan for and **incorporate 1:1 technical assistance on organizational development and sustainability**. Grassroots organizations need support to maintain and build internal staffing, financial services, human resources, operations and fundraising systems. This support could come in the form of 1:1 technical assistance, trainings, executive coaching, peer learning and more.

4 ▶ Technical Assistance Needs

The PACE program provided 1:1 technical assistance to support frontline leaders to advance community-led initiatives to address climate change and social justice. Over the course of the program, we have identified the following **four key categories of technical assistance needed to support grassroot visions**.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

As mentioned above, CBOs, non-profit organizations and Tribal governments need overall support to sustain, grow and scale their operations. Many grassroots groups are building up their internal systems from scratch and don't know where to look for resources, templates or models. Grassroots organizations would benefit from robust 1:1 technical support, professional or executive coaching, and peer-to-peer learning on non-profit sustainability and development. Below is a sample of the organizational capacity building needs encountered during PACE:

- Data management and evaluation
- Legal services for intellectual property
- Models for decision-making, including more collaborative models
- Facilitating difficult conversations, including around racial justice and accountability
- Budgeting and budget equity
- Strategic planning

- Grant writing
- Fundraising from diverse sources: public grants, philanthropy, corporate sponsorships, capital campaigns, financing for real estate acquisition, etc.
- Board development
- Fiscal sponsorships
- Developing non-profit infrastructure
- Leadership transitions

SKILLS

Beyond organizational capacity building, the PACE Leaders identified the need for specific skills to grow their impact. Below is a list of skills-building needed to support the development, implementation and evaluation of projects, programs or campaigns:

- Project management
- Participatory budgeting

- Policy writing and effective communication (such as public comments, blogs, op-eds etc.)
- Gaining awareness of and evaluating grant opportunities
- Grant writing and grant management
- Coalition building and facilitation to bring together local and regional partners
- Navigating State policymaking processes
- Data mapping and visualization, including ArcGIS
- Results-based accountability and evaluation
- Experiential learning opportunities to apply the formal skills learned
- Graphic design layout for reports or infographics

CONTENT

PACE Leaders were also eager for additional training and education around specific content topics. The Leaders advanced intersectional climate projects, many of which required additional skills-building beyond their primary focus areas. Participants found tangible tools and resources—such as walk-throughs of different data tools, best practices and case studies—especially helpful. Below is a sample of content topics that PACE Leaders identified seeking technical assistance for:

- 100% clean and reliable energy
- Transportation options
- Agricultural loans and funding
- AB-617 Community Air Protection Program
- Demonstrations of data tools like CalEnviroScreen and CalAdapt
- Community gardens, urban farming, and food sovereignty
- Ecological restoration
- Alternatives to agricultural burning
- Housing affordability
- Zoning
- Youth development
- Community Benefit Agreements

CONNECTIONS

As explored in the Best Practices section, peer-to-peer learning and building connections across sectors was a key emphasis of the PACE program. PACE Leaders appreciated the opportunity to develop 1:1 connections with the other cohort members, the Project Team, State agencies, technical assistance providers and

other stakeholders. Below is a summary of the types of connections that that are most important to foster:

- **Peer-to-Peer Learning**

    Grassroots leaders are innovating creative community solutions from the ground up. Many community leaders, however, lack connections to other communities tackling similar challenges and strategies. Peer-to-peer learning allows frontline communities to share knowledge and best practices, tackle common challenges and build collective strength.

- **Connections with Technical Experts**

    Several of the PACE Leaders particularly valued being connected to other experts or technical assistance providers in the field. For example, one PACE Leader was interested in starting a community development corporation. Through PACE's 1:1 TA, they were then connected to technical assistance providers for real estate acquisition and development, as well as other non-profit organizations who had purchased building property.

- **Connections with State Agencies**

    Many frontline communities are not deeply familiar with the California policymaking or public funding processes. PACE Leaders reported valuing opportunities to build ongoing relationships with State agencies such as through the State Resource Fair organized by the program. Through these smaller group conversations, PACE Leaders and State agencies engaged in more meaningful dialogue about community needs and aspirations, and Leaders better understood State programs beyond what can be shared just through public webinars or guidelines documents.

    Moreover, relationship building with State agencies enhanced Leaders' awareness of public processes, boards and commissions, and PACE Leaders have since gone on to serve on the AB-32 Environmental Justice Advisory Committee[15] and the Environmental Justice Advisory Group for the California Ocean Protection Council's Equity Plan.[16]

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[15] California Air Resources Board. Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/environmental-justice-advisory-committee.

[16] Ocean Protection Council. Announcing the Environmental Justice Advisory Group. https://www.opc.ca.gov/2021/09/announcing-the-environmental-justice-advisory-group/.

STATE PRACTICES: CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

PACE Leaders were eager to leverage public policies and funding to engage residents, advance campaigns and implement capital projects to reduce GHG emissions and improve quality-of-life in their neighborhoods. However, many PACE Leaders—especially those representing CBOs and Indigenous groups—faced challenges in accessing State policymaking and investments.

To advance the State's commitment to climate equity, it is critical that State programs, policies and guidelines be made more accessible to CBOs, non-profit organizations and Tribal governments. The State has a responsibility to change the structural barriers--embodied in government programs, policies, guidelines and practices--so that all communities can participate and lead on local climate actions.

1 ▶ Tailored Outreach Necessary for Frontline Communities

PACE was intended to build capacity with frontline community leaders from across California. Even as an equity-centered program, however, the Project Team struggled to initially bring together a cohort that reflected geographic diversity across the state. **Different regions of the state hold differences in existing capacity and types of CBO infrastructure**, and our normal outreach methods were not successful in reaching some of these regions. Specifically, we encountered challenges in making meaningful outreach to more rural areas such as the North Coast and Sierra Nevada regions. Initial applicants from the Sierra Nevada region represented regional government entities, rather than community-facing or community-serving institutions.[17]

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[17] PACE originally did not exclude local government entities from participating in the program. Selection criteria required that applicants serve as trusted community partners.

To address this gap, the PACE Project Team engaged in strategic outreach in the North Coast and Sierra Nevada regions, connecting directly with community-based, local and regional government and other groups to share the PACE opportunity. We then modified the selection process to add a second round of interviews specifically to interview candidates from these regions. This dedicated outreach and modified selection process ultimately proved to be successful, and we selected an exemplary community leader from Sierra Nevada to join the cohort.

This experience and approach can serve as an example on how the State can take a tailored, flexible, and iterative approach in ensuring outreach to and participation of communities throughout the State.

Best practices involve committing additional resources to outreach in harder-to-reach parts of the State, partnering with trusted organizations to facilitate equitable outreach in the appropriate language, and creating flexibility in timelines to ensure that sufficient time is spent doing outreach in these communities. The State should focus efforts on building up community-led capacity in parts of California that lack that critical infrastructure.

2 State Programs Fail to Meet the Unique Needs of Indigenous Communities

As a program focused on underserved frontline communities, the PACE program was intentional in selecting a cohort that included Indigenous and Tribal members. The Project Team has learned so much working with our Indigenous Leaders, and are deeply appreciative that they have shared their wisdom, expertise, critical insights and learnings with us. While Tribal groups face many of the same barriers as other frontline communities, the unique status of California Native American Tribes requires that the State plan for additional considerations in policymaking and funding. Even as there is greater recognition of the injustices perpetrated against Native American communities, California policymaking has not been specifically attuned to the needs, priorities and leadership of Indigenous communities and Tribes.

We offer below a sample of the unique structural challenges faced by PACE's Indigenous and Tribal Leaders. We note that **our Indigenous Leaders only represent a sample of perspectives and it is critical that their input is not generalized for their region, organization type, or demographic group**. Our Indigenous Leaders have explicitly expressed that they should not be seen as a spokesperson for all Native American

communities.[18] We also point to the Tribal Appendix to the Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies[19] and the pending California Tribal Gap Analysis[20] as additional resources to better understand the unique needs, challenges and policy recommendations related to California Tribes.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN STRIPPED OF STRUCTURAL POWER

PACE's Indigenous Leaders repeatedly highlighted the power imbalance between Tribal communities, Tribes and the State. While the State of California is attempting to build deeper relationships with Native Americans, **the State still holds enormous structural power and has not done the internal work necessary to truly acknowledge let alone repair the systemic violence committed against Tribal communities**.

Leaders shared that engaging with the State occurs through a top-down process. Here, the State defines the rules, processes and intended outcomes of engagement. Rather than meeting in the middle in a government-to-government relationship, Tribes must meet the State according to the State's rules. Tribes are thus forced to adopt overall approaches that are in many cases incompatible with Indigenous cultures and frameworks. Moreover, the State denies Tribal autonomy over decision-making, instead requiring Tribal governments to engage with the State through complex bureaucratic processes.

> By re-teaching, re-learning, and amplifying the resiliency that is deeply rooted in Indigenous communities, we as individuals, our strengths, and a shared vision, and as a society as a whole, can break down the barriers of institutional racism, violence, and climate inequities that have oppressed Indigenous and communities of color.
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> **PACE LEADER**

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[18] California's Indigenous communities represent a huge diversity of geographies, cultures and languages. There are divergent perspectives and hugely differentiated needs across and even within Tribal groups. Traditional engagement approaches, however, often treat Tribal voices as homogenous. Indigenous leaders should not be expected to speak for all Tribes, and each Tribal entity should be seen as sovereign in their own right.

[19] Strategic Growth Council. (2020). Tribal Appendix to the Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies. https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/cace/docs/20201015-TA_Guidelines-Apdx_A.pdf.

[20] California Tribal Gap Analysis. https://caltribalgapanalysis.org/.

To repair wrongs and reverse decades of oppression, the State should commit to divesting itself of power, engaging in meaningful Tribal consultation, and supporting Tribal authority.

One of the PACE Leaders, for example, conducts prescribed burns as a cultural and ecological management practice. Tribal communities have been practicing controlled burns for over a millennia, actively shaping the North American landscape. American federal policy, however, advanced a strategy of fire suppression, contributing to the destructive wildfires we see today. Today, Tribal communities are eager to revitalize prescribed burn practices. However, rather than being given autonomy to do so, they must enter into laborious and time-consuming negotiations with the State.

PUBLIC FUNDING FAILS TO MEET NEEDS OF NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Beyond divesting authority, much of the State's policies, programs and funding streams do not meet Indigenous or Tribal needs. **Native communities have long acted as the stewards of natural ecosystems and have positively shaped and managed the American landscape.** Many Indigenous communities thus hold unique priorities centered around traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), honoring and caring for all plant and animal relatives, and protecting cultural resources that are threatened by climate change impacts. However, the State's California Climate Investment portfolio and other public funding programs do not offer significant investments centered on TEK and native resource management, or funding prioritized specifically for Indigenous or Tribal groups.

In cases where Tribes do apply for State funding, PACE's Indigenous Leaders experienced significant challenges in successfully achieving funding. Many grant programs are designed for local government applicants, and these **general eligibility requirements do not apply to Tribal governments and reflect a lack of understanding of Tribal sovereignty**.

Many Tribes may also not have sufficient capacity or technical expertise to develop competitive funding applications, or the format in which their community holds knowledge is not recognized as valid by the State. As a result of these gaps, the PACE program has been less successful in supporting our Native leaders to access public funding for their priorities. PACE's Indigenous leaders have articulated powerful visions for their communities ranging from land rematriation (returning

Indigenous land to Indigenous peoples) to TEK to cultural and language preservation. But these visions remain unsupported by public funding.

Moving forward, the State should advance reparations, land rematriation and equitable public funding for Indigenous and Tribal communities across California.

Recent State initiatives (such as the $100 million budget proposal to support Tribal-led initiatives[21] and the forthcoming California's 5th Assessment Tribal Program managed by the California Energy Commission and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research) are steps in the right direction, but many additional policies and investments are needed.

NON-FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES FACE ADDITIONAL BARRIERS

The largest population of Native Americans reside in California, and California's Native communities represent a diversity of geographies, cultures and languages. While federally recognized Tribes hold reservation lands and are accorded federal recognition status, many Tribes lack such recognition and are not seen as sovereign by the federal government. Non-federally recognized Tribes therefore lack eligibility for most government programs, services and protection.

Some of PACE's Indigenous Leaders represent non-federally recognized Tribes, and have expressed frustration with having to prove their legitimacy to an oppressive system of federal, state and local governments.

In many cases, non-federally recognized Tribes do not live on or have ownership over their ancestral homelands, and also do not have a clear pathway to land rematriation. They are also not eligible for Federal and many State grant programs.

To support non-federally recognized Tribes, the State can ensure that State and local agencies receive training on proper consultation protocols, proactively consult

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[21] Office of Governor Gavin Newsom. Governor Newsom Proposed $100 Million to Support Tribal-Led Initiatives that Advance Shared Climate and Conservation Goals. https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/03/18/governor-newsom-proposes-100-million-to-support-tribal-led-initiatives-that-advance-shared-climate-and-conservation-goals/#.

with Tribes on the Native American Heritage Commission List, open up funding program eligibility for grant programs of interest and ensure land eligibility for transfer policies.[22]

CHALLENGES WITH TRIBAL DATA

Compared to other population groups, limited data is available on Tribal communities. Due to genocide and forced relocation, many Native communities have been geographically scattered. Because of this, statewide and national datasets (such as CalEnviroScreen) fail to capture the specific conditions and demographic data of Indigenous groups. In addition, there are very few community-specific or local data available on Tribal communities. This creates **an inaccurate understanding of the condition and needs of Native American groups**, and provides an additional barrier for PACE's Native Leaders in applying for State funding.

Moreover, **much Tribal data that *does* exist is highly privileged and confidential**. For example, data related to sacred sites should not be publicly shared or published for fear that such information could be exploited. The PACE Project Team worked 1:1 with one of the Indigenous Leaders to ensure that their privileged Tribal data would not be shared publicly.

The State should **support Tribal communities in collecting community and local data**, as well as in offering flexibility in program and funding guidelines for Tribal groups around the publication of Tribal data.

3 ▶ Public Funding Must Be Flexible, Ongoing & Democratized

One of PACE's key goals was to support grassroots leaders as they navigate State funding programs and secure resources for their community-led work. PACE Leaders were eager to leverage public funding to engage residents, advance campaigns and implement capital projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the social determinants of health in their neighborhoods. However, many PACE Leaders struggled to secure ongoing and sufficient funding to meet community needs.

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[22] For example, the California Public Utilities Commission opened a proceeding to consider revisions to its Tribal Land Transfer Policy. California Public Utilities Commission. CPUC Acts to Enhance Tribal Land Transfer Policy Implementation Guidelines. https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/news-and-updates/all-news/cpuc-acts-to-enhance-tribal-land-transfer-policy-implementation-guidelines.

The majority of State funding is not tailored to be accessible to or meet the needs of smaller CBOs, non-profit organizations or Tribal governments.

Overall, public funding must be made flexible, ongoing and democratized. This is particularly important for funds that support planning, community engagement, evaluation and other non-infrastructure costs that are within the wheelhouse of community-serving organizations. If the State is committed to centering frontline communities as key stakeholders in informing action and policy, it is critical that public funding be made more accessible to CBOs, non-profit organizations and Tribal governments.

MAKE NEED-DRIVEN INVESTMENTS TO REDUCE STRUCTURAL INEQUITIES

California's climate investment architecture has been developed to support the State in meeting its climate goals. While the State has identified overarching investment priorities with some consultation from communities, more could be done to use public funding to address equity gaps and support diverse community visions from planning to implementation.

PACE Leaders identified the need for significant public investment in their neighborhoods to reduce generational inequities, and highlighted that they wished that they didn't have to compete with other frontline communities for limited funding. To meet community needs, the State should **resource additional programs for community transformation and capital investment**. To reverse decades of disinvestment and structural oppression, the State should provide the public investments necessary to bring these visions to life.

FUND THE PATHWAY FROM COMMUNITY PLANNING TO TRANSFORMATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

PACE Leaders specifically identified the need for both planning and implementation investments to ensure tangible benefits based on community needs.

Across the board, communities need funded time to establish shared visions, develop partnerships, build skills and identify specific priorities and strategies. Significant technical support is then required to turn those strategies into a portfolio of shovel-ready projects.

Many of the PACE Leaders came from organizations that lack the staffing, infrastructure or technical expertise to turn community ideas into pre-approved projects that can begin construction upon securing investment. Communities therefore need to be connected to pre-development technical assistance to translate community visions into project-ready portfolios.

To meet this need, planning grants can provide a pathway for communities that have suffered historic disinvestment to invest in the foundational community engagement and partnership development needed to advance community-led projects. Such planning resources should then be paired with financial resources for the creative capital investments needed to transform frontline communities into thriving communities.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

In addition to making catalytic investments in frontline communities, PACE Leaders highlighted **the need to democratize the funding process itself**. Leaders heard from the Participatory Budgeting Project[23] in cohort sessions, and were excited by the concept of bringing people to collectively decide how to spend public money.

Frontline leaders want real decision-making power over the investments happening in their neighborhoods. Residents deserve transparency in public budgets, including how decisions are made and how the public can get involved.

As a start, the State can **create more pathways and improve accessibility of existing public funding** to communities. Providing more support for communities to inform program guidelines at the outset can help communities to better understand programs, prepare for funding rounds and shape programs to meet local needs.

ADVANCE PAYMENT OF GRANT FUNDS

As previously explored, many of the PACE Leaders struggled with cash flow issues because their primary funding sources were project-based public grants. Most State grants are disbursed on a reimbursement method, which means that even though

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[23] Participatory Budgeting Project. https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/.

the PACE Leaders were already grant recipients, they were not immediately allocated funds to commence work. Instead, the Leaders had to first complete deliverables using their own resources and then submit invoices for reimbursement. Moreover, many Leaders reported that **reimbursements from State agencies often took as long as 6-12 months to process.**

This reimbursement model presented significant cash flow challenges for the PACE Leaders. Most non-profit and community-based organizations, as well as some local governments, simply do not have available extra resources to float several months of payroll and expenses.

The current reimbursement-based grant funding model disincentivizes our most under-capacity communities from seeking out public funding.

It also severely restricts the ability of grantees to sustain their own financial viability under State grants. This financial barrier represents a significant roadblock to the State's commitment to targeting investments to priority communities.

The experiences of the PACE Leaders points to the need for the State to **permit agencies the authority and discretion to make advance payments**. Advance payment would ensure more equitable access to State funding and would support grant and program implementation.

INVEST IN ONGOING FUNDING

In addition to new community-centered funding programs, communities also simply need ongoing funding support. As previously explored, many of the PACE Leaders were stuck in a cycle of project-based funding, where funding is secured only for specific projects and not for ongoing general operating support. This created an inefficient stop-start dynamic where communities come together for discrete grant proposals and then disband once the funding runs out.

The momentum, shared purpose and staff time for collaborative work disappears at the end of the grant term – and lasting community change won't be accomplished through one cycle of funding.

Transformation takes time and builds off of shared visions, partnerships, trust and expertise sustained over years, or even decades.

State agencies must therefore **offer ongoing funding to support the long-term capacity building, planning, and implementation needs of communities**. This funding can look like:

- Multi-year funding. Grant timelines of 3-5 years would allow communities to invest for the long-term.
- Renewal granting for successful projects.
- Partnerships with philanthropy to support funding for ongoing operations and maintenance.
- Partnerships with philanthropy to provide unrestricted funds to invest in general organizational sustainability and support CBOs as the backbone anchors for many neighborhoods.

PROVIDE FUNDING FLEXIBILITY

Many State grants are restrictive in the types of activities and projects they are able to fund. While funding parameters can provide helpful guardrails, **many of the current funding restrictions force communities to either pay for additional costs out of their own pockets or not include more comprehensive, holistic services within their grant**.

Throughout the program, PACE Leaders highlighted the need for more flexible funding, particularly as it pertains to community engagement and planning expenses. Additional flexibility within funding requirements would allow communities to better meet their needs and engage residents.

Below we offer a sampling of flexible funding needs that should be allowable within State grants:

Community engagement expenses, including:

- Food and refreshments at meetings
- Childcare at meetings
- Participant compensation or stipends

Capacity building expenses, including:

- Trainings (ex: racial equity trainings for local government, project management, workforce development)
- Peer-to-peer learning

Program management expenses, including:

- Evaluation and impact tracking
- Tool subscriptions (ex: project management tools, digital community engagement tools for residents)

As a model, the Strategic Growth Council's Regional Climate Collaboratives Round 1 Draft Program Guidelines offers a comprehensive list of eligible expenses that includes important community engagement, training, peer-to-peer learning and capacity costs.[24]

RIGHT-SIZE PROGRAMS TO MEET COMMUNITY CAPACITY

PACE Leaders voiced the **need for additional grant programs targeted directly at community-based organizations and Tribal governments**. As previously mentioned, many of the PACE Leaders are eager to lead on local climate actions, but are often shut out of large-scale grants because of their size or technical complexity.

For example, many PACE Leaders identified the need for parks and tree plantings to green their neighborhoods, provide safe walking routes, reduce emissions and alleviate the urban heat island effect. However, most of the PACE Leaders come from organizations that do not have the technical or administrative capacity to develop large-scale parks or active transportation systems. They would benefit from smaller grant sizes that would allow them to start from a smaller scale but still achieve meaningful community benefits.

State agencies could right-size their funding programs to best meet community capacity, funding or sub-granting smaller grant awards to allow all communities across California to advance neighborhood-scale projects.

This small-scale funding, networked across the State, would support California in meeting its climate goals, building community leadership and developing ongoing local technical capacity to lead on climate solutions.

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[24] Strategic Growth Council. Regional Climate Collaboratives Program Round 1 DRAFT Program Guidelines FY 2021 - 2022. https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/cace/docs/20220207-RCC_Program_Draft_Guidelines_Round_1.pdf. 8-11.

SIMPLIFY GRANT APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Lastly, many of the PACE Leaders identified that going through both the grant application and grant management processes required significant, and oftentimes uncompensated, administrative capacity.

Leaders urgently wanted to take advantage of available funds and policies to advance climate equity, but overly burdensome grant processes made this difficult.

PACE Leaders recommended that State agencies simplify their application, invoicing and reporting processes to make grant application and management more accessible and community-driven. One potential suggestion would be to **offer a standardized application for all grant programs**, so that communities would only have to submit their overall vision and project specifications once. Applications that met minimum thresholds could then move onto the next phase of the application.

> " During this time when more money will be dedicated to the environment than ever before, I feel like PACE taught me a great foundation for executing plans of large impact, sustainable projects. Most importantly, the encouragement of the PACE program to think bigger is an act that no one has ever dared this big thinker to do and it's a muscle I intend to flex.
>
> **PACE LEADER**

State agencies could also **conduct internal equity evaluations of their grant management and application requirements** to assess how their administrative processes could be streamlined to improve public access. For example, an equity assessment could distinguish which administrative requirements are statutorily required, and which requirements are in fact just custom or accepted practice.

Agencies could also **assess their grant requirements to allow greater flexibility** for non-profit organizations and Tribal governments to apply as lead or co-applicants. Such an assessment should be tied to deeper community engagement with communities, to ground-truth how grant programs could be made more accessible to frontline communities.

PARTNERS ADVANCING CLIMATE EQUITY

CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

Launching a New Cycle of Capacity Building and Community Empowerment in California's Frontline Communities

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