

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force December 2025 Meeting Summary:

Dec. 11, 2025

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Nelson Hawkins called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m. Camille Frazier welcomed attendees, provided housekeeping remarks, gave a land acknowledgement, reviewed participation guidelines, and previewed the day's agenda.

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by staff. Members present:

- Nelson Hawkins, Chair
- Irene de Barraicua*
- Nathaniel Brown
- Ruth Dahlquist-Willard
- Darlene Franco
- Lawrence Harlan
- James Nakahara
- Dorian Payán
- Liya Schwartzman
- Thea Rittenhouse (arrived at 9:23)
- Doria Robinson
- Qi Zhou

Members absent:

- Emily Burgueno, Vice Chair

Quorum was established.

Staff Attendance:

Staff members present:

- Sarah Bauer, California Strategic Growth Council (Legal Counsel)
- Camille Frazier, California Strategic Growth Council
- Sean Kennedy, California Strategic Growth Council
- Melissa Moyce, California Strategic Growth Council
- Tessa Salzman, California Strategic Growth Council

- Alex Schweitzer Kroll, California Strategic Growth Council
- Caleb Swanson, California Strategic Growth Council

* *Denotes virtual attendance*

Action: Approval of Summary

Approval of Nov. 13, 2025, Meeting Summary.

Action:

Member Brown moved to approve the meeting summary. Member Dahlquist-Willard seconded.

Task Force Discussion:

None.

Public Comment:

None.

Action:

Motion passed. (12-0-1*). (*One absent for vote.)

Staff Report

Staff provided updates:

- The Task Force has received written public comment.
- Staff met individually with each Task Force member since the November 2025 meeting.
- A video booth was provided during the lunch break for Task Force members to reflect on their work and next steps.
- Updated budget information.

Public Comment:

None.

Working Session

Members referenced the December 2025 version of the updated [Draft Report](#) and its [appendices](#). Staff provided an overview of the working session and its associated goals and then reviewed key changes made since the November 2025 meeting. The purpose of the working session was to resolve remaining discussion points before voting on the Report later in the day.

The [Language for Task Force Review](#) document was shared on screen for members to engage in detailed discussion. Staff made in-line tracked changes to the document as discussion unfolded, and members expressed their level of support for the various decision points.

Discussion highlights:

Decision 1 (2.5.f):

Task Force Discussion: None.

Outcome: Include language and text box in the Report.

Decision 2 (3.1.a):

Task Force Discussion:

- Grammatical clarification.

Outcome: Incorporate addition.

Decision 3 (3.1.a):

Task Force Discussion:

- Members clarified who is being referenced in this recommendation.
- A member suggested adding language to clarify that all the proposed language is for research, not immediate policy change.
- Members identified the origin of this language.
 - A Task Force member proposed adding this language based on written public comment the Task Force received, review of a relevant academic paper, and discussion with researchers familiar with these issues.
- Members sought understanding of how erosion of rural communities' tax bases can occur.

Outcome: Incorporate additions (3.1.d.ii-vi) and clarify throughout so that sub-bullet points are listed as research topics.

Decision 5 (4.2.g):

Task Force Discussion:

- Members requested that language be added clarifying that these are research requests.

Outcome: Include in Report, ensuring sub-bullets are clearly framed as research topics.

Decision 6 (Producer and land steward definitions):

Staff provided clarifying context for this discussion, reviewing the four alternatives presented to the Task Force. Staff clarified that priority producers and land stewards are

found together throughout the Report. The Task Force measured levels of support for each alternative, all of which lacked substantial Task Force support. Task Force members proposed combining three of these alternatives: adding the proposed language from the staff recommendation, adding the paragraph explaining the Task Force’s process in reaching these definitions in Alternative A, and adding the definitions of producer and land steward in Alternative B.

Task Force Discussion on Task Force proposal:

- Members noted that “land steward” has a close connection to Tribal stewardship and its associated responsibilities.
- Members requested that “Tribal” be added in front of “land steward(s)” throughout the Report.
- Members requested that ancestral and spiritual connection be added to the definition of Tribal land steward.
- Members asked that “activities” in the definition of “producer” change to “agricultural practices.”

Outcome: Include the proposed language from the staff recommendation, add the paragraph explaining the Task Force’s process in reaching these definitions in Alternative A, add the updated definitions of producer and land steward in Alternative B based on the Task Force’s discussion, and change the term “land steward” to “Tribal land steward(s)” throughout the Report.

Decision 7 (Agricultural land equity definition):

Task Force Discussion:

- Some members initially supported the proposed revision to the definition of agricultural land equity, while others expressed concern about conflating equality and equity in the definition of agricultural land equity.
- Some members proposed changing “all people” to “priority producers and Tribal land stewards.” Some members expressed concern with this change due to its narrowed focus, while others noted that this change would clarify the meaning of equity and how it is used throughout the Report.

Outcome: Adopt the following definition of agricultural land equity throughout the Report: “Agricultural land equity is when priority producers and Tribal land stewards have access to secure, affordable, and viable land for the stewardship and cultivation of food, fiber, medicine, and cultural resources without systemic barriers, disparities, or exploitation.”

Decision 8 (6.1):

Task Force Discussion:

- Members discussed the efficacy of urban agriculture incentive zones and whether they should be included in the recommendations.
- Members clarified that the grant programs mentioned should refer specifically to grants that support agricultural activities, food systems, land access, and conservation.
- Members emphasized the importance of ensuring that this research is accompanied by recommendations on how to make urban agriculture incentive zones better.

Outcome: Revise 6.1.d by adding “related to agricultural land access” to “in existing state and local grant programs;” keep 6.1.d.iii; revise 6.2.a, as requested by Task Force members.

Decision 9 (Organizational revisions):

Task Force Discussion:

None.

Outcome: Maintain existing Report organization.

Other Report Edits:

Staff shared a list of necessary revisions that will be completed before the Report is submitted, including:

- Copyediting corrections for grammar, spelling, etc.
- Adding a map displaying the Task Force’s engagement work on p. 11.
- Adding a list of relevant recommendations to each section cover page.
- Ensuring text box and photo placement is appropriate for the text surrounding it.
- Standardizing captions for photos.
- Changing the title of the Report to “Recommendations of” instead of “Recommendations from.”

Task Force Discussion:

- Do not center justify the text on page 2 and in similar places in the Report.
- Add the section of the Report to page headers or footers. Link between sections of the Report so readers can easily jump to relevant text.
- Add the full list of all 109 federally recognized California Tribes before the table in Section 1, noting that these lists are not identical. Change the column header to say, “Reservation or Rancheria Population.” Staff will review the census data and clarify accordingly.
- Use more photos that contain people, not just landscapes.
- Update two members’ titles on page 9.

- Ask the graphic designer if there are ways to improve readability of column formatting.
- Change the caption on page 80 to align with other photo captions.

Public Comment:

None.

Action: Approve Report for Submission

Staff reviewed revisions made to the Report over the lunch break based on Task Force discussion, showing the Report on screen and gradually walking through each change made. Task Force members further clarified that the sub-bullets in 3.1.d should each start by saying something along the lines of “Research into the potential of...” For 4.2.g.i and 4.2.g.ii, Task Force members requested adding “Research evaluating...” and “Research into mechanisms...,” respectively. Task Force members also requested that 6.2.a change to say “Fund research to evaluate the efficacy of...” (regarding urban agriculture incentive zones). Task Force members also requested that 6.1.c change to say, “In new and existing programs that fund agriculture, food system, land access, and conservation...” and that this change be reflected in 6.1.d, too. A Task Force member also noted a typo in the word “stewardship” in Appendix F.

Staff then provided a final review of all additional changes that will be made to the Report before it is submitted, including:

- Reviewing page footers/headers to ensure the sections are clear and adding links to relevant sections within the Report.
- Removing instances of center justification.
- Switching photos of landscapes for photos of people.
- Reviewing column formatting for ease of readability.
- Adding a separate list of all 109 federally recognized Tribes from the Federal Register.
- Reviewing and clarifying data in the table in Section 1.
- Adding a note to Section 1 that the U.S. Census data does not directly correspond to the list of 109 federally recognized California Native American Tribes maintained by the Federal Register.
- Updating “land stewards” throughout the Report to say, “Tribal land stewards.”
- Ensuring all references to definitions are updated throughout the Report.
- Correcting any formatting issues or errors in graphic design due to the approved revisions made in the meeting.
- Changing text and design of the Report based on edits approved by the Task Force during today’s meeting.

- Making minor revisions to formatting for accessibility compliance.
- Copyediting for minor revisions, like correcting punctuation errors or standardizing citations.

Members considered staff’s recommended action: “Approve the text in the Final Report, as revised and presented here today, for submission to the Governor and Legislature in accordance with applicable statutory requirements, and authorize SGC staff to make and incorporate any necessary formatting, compliance-related, and copyediting modifications to the Final Report to ensure it is suitable for submission.”

Action:

Chair Hawkins called for a motion to approve the staff recommendation. Member Nakahara moved that the Task Force approve the staff recommendation. Member Robinson seconded the motion.

Task Force Discussion:

None.

Public Comment:

None.

Action:

Motion passed. (12-0-1*). (*One absent for vote.)

Next Steps

By Jan. 1, 2026, staff will deliver the Report to the Governor’s Office and follow the appropriate procedures for electronically submitting the Report to the Secretary of State, Chief Clerk of the Assembly, and Office of Legislative Counsel. The Final Task Force meeting will be on Tuesday, Feb. 24 from 1-4 p.m. The Task Force will then have the opportunity to present to the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) at the Feb. 25, 2026 SGC meeting. Staff will work with the Task Force to plan this presentation.

Task Force Discussion:

- Members requested that staff work to identify an opportunity for the Task Force to present to the Governor’s Office and provide legislative briefings.
 - Staff clarified that Task Force members may, in their capacity as members of the public, engage in advocacy and Report promotion.
- Members requested that staff develop an outline for how people can engage with the grant program that is being developed.

- Staff will add this to the media toolkit that is being developed for the Task Force members. Other items in the media toolkit include:
 - A ~5-page Report summary.
 - Fact sheets for specific audiences like priority producers and Tribal land stewards, California Native American Tribes, aspiring farmers, organizations that hold land or provide technical assistance, and local governments.
 - The above resources will be translated into Spanish and Mandarin. A member recommended also translating these materials into Hmong-Mien.
- Staff also shared that they are working to develop a web version of the Report and associated materials. Staff are also working on developing and distributing tailored outreach materials and establishing local assistance provider contracts to assist with Report distribution and promotion.
- Some members requested printed copies to share with their communities. Staff will develop a mechanism for members to request printed copies
- Members also requested having a repository of information gathered through the Task Force’s process that members of the public can access and review. Staff will consider how best to include this on the website.
- Members requested that staff develop PowerPoint templates for members to use when presenting about the Task Force.
- Members requested staff support for presentations at conferences and other events.
- Members also requested a presentation at a joint meeting of the State Board of Food and Agriculture and the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Small-Scale Producer and BIPOC Advisory Committees.

Members next discussed a public letter from United States Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins to Governor Newsom regarding the Task Force’s recommendations. Following Task Force deliberation and staff clarification on Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act requirements, members Nakahara and Dahlquist-Willard agreed to draft a letter to Governor Newsom that clarifies the Task Force’s recommendations and welcomes further discussion. Members Robinson, de Barraicua, Franco, Schwartzman, and Zhou gave consent for their names to be included as signatories to this letter.

Public Comment

- Jamie Fanous, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, offered support to the Task Force with communication, press releases, and more.

- Adam X, advocate and community member, shared that he viewed the public letter from Secretary Rollins to Governor Newsom as disrespectful and inaccurate.

General Public Comment

- Temu Martin expressed support for the Task Force’s Report, especially Sections 1 and 2, and shared that he viewed the public letter from Secretary Rollins as disrespectful, dismissive, and inaccurate.

Meeting Adjourned

Chair Hawkins provided closing comments and adjourned the meeting at 3:34 p.m.