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PREPARED BY

*USC PERE*

*(Program for  
Environmental and  
Regional Equity)*

IN COLLABORATION WITH

*Health and Justice  
for All Power-Building  
Landscape Working  
Group*



**California  
Health and  
Justice for All  
Power-Building  
Landscape:  
Defining the  
Ecosystem**

## ■ Summary

### OVERVIEW

The Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape Assessment (PLA) is a scan and data-driven analysis of the organizational landscape in California that supports “historically-excluded adults and youth having power, agency, and voice in public and private decision making to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps”—one of The California Endowment’s North Star Goals. The purpose of the PLA is to inform discussions—both within The California Endowment (TCE) and, importantly, between TCE and practitioners and peers in the field—and decision making about the evolution of TCE’s 10-year Building Healthy Communities Initiative beyond 2020.

The goals of this brief are to provide a framework for understanding what types of organizations comprise the power-building ecosystem in California; share key observations about local-to-statewide dynamics and capacities that drive policy, systems, and structural changes; and provoke new thinking and approaches to measuring power. The findings are drawn from an assessment of the power-building organizational landscape in California; review of literature on organizing, power building, and social movements; discussions within TCE and with external partners; interviews with leaders in the field, and previous research and interviews with organizers, strategists, organizers, and funders dating back to 2008.

### AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

Achieving health and justice for all Californians is beyond the reach of any single organization, strategy, or approach. In fact, it requires an ecosystem of diverse organizations that can collectively influence the broad terrain where ideas, policies, and power are contested. Central to the ecosystem are organizations developing an active and aligned base of leaders and members (whether community, students, faith, or labor) that can engage decision makers and hold them accountable.

Yet an organized base alone is insufficient to challenging the systems and structures that produce inequality. Through alliances, coalitions, and informal networks, they work with organizations that bring research and legal support, advocacy and policy expertise, communications and cultural change, and leadership development support. And they need the individuals, intermediaries, and institutions that provide funding, training and technical assistance, technology, and other supports for establishing and sustaining strong organizations.

## KEY FINDINGS

### UNDERSTANDING THE ECOSYSTEM

California's power-building ecosystem is dynamic and constantly evolving. Its capacities, health, and influence are tied to context—whether by geography, population, or issue. To understand strengths and gaps, the ecosystem should be looked at through two dimensions: one that measures the level of alignment of groups around a common agenda, and one that measures the level of power and influence to implement that agenda.

### NURTURING WHAT'S GROWING

There is growing reach, connectedness, sophistication, and experimentation among organizations that are building power. It has taken time, intention, and patience to build from the ground up. Today, the ecosystem has reached such a level of maturity that it can support growth, scaling, and impact much more rapidly than it could have even a decade ago. A recommended next step is to look at emerging opportunities to nurture by county or region and to understand the conditions, capacities, and possible contributions to an overall statewide power equation that gets closer to the goal of health and justice for all.

### SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

While organizations take on initiatives and campaigns with near-term policy and systems change goals, they are operating within a broader strategy for building power over the long term. And they leverage participation in different alliances and coalitions to do so. There are different approaches to building power—and they are not mutually exclusive. For example, some alliances are focused on specializing in particular capacities. Others are broadening reach to new constituencies rooted in the same place. And some are focused on building power of a particular constituency. It suggests a diversification and specialization of roles, which makes coordination, alignment, and shared learning increasingly important activities for the ecosystem to undertake.

### MEASURING THE ECOSYSTEM

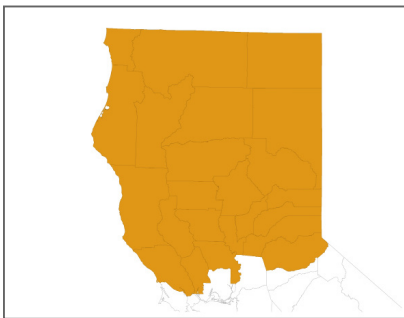
Criteria that can be used to guide strategic investments in organizations should reflect what effective power-building organizations share in common. They are committed to building power among populations that are most impacted by inequities; have a multi-year strategy or at least recognize the need for a multi-year plan based on an analysis of power; work in strategic alliances and collaborations because they see that it is not effective to work alone; and seek to build lasting infrastructure and capacities that can pivot to new opportunities. The PLA points to an opportunity to push both philanthropy and the field toward a new ecosystem-approach to evaluation and measurement. Rather than measuring the capacity, influence, and effectiveness of individual organizations, it is the diverse and dynamic ecosystem that should serve as the unit of evaluation. And an assessment of capacity strengths and gaps should be tailored to each region, target population, or particular issue.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR TCE

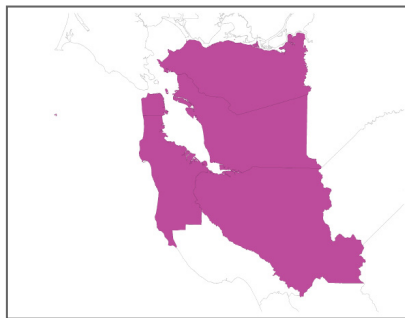
Through its 10-year Building Healthy Communities Initiative, TCE has contributed to new organizing capacity throughout the state—and itself is an influential part of the state’s dynamic ecosystem. The following are principles for TCE to consider as it is planning for the next 10 years:

- Center—do not displace—the importance of one-on-one organizing and base building among excluded populations;
- Nurture—do not disrupt—the growing sophistication, connectedness, and reach of organizations building voice, power, and influence;
- Tailor—do not impose—strategic interventions to leverage local power-building efforts for statewide impact.

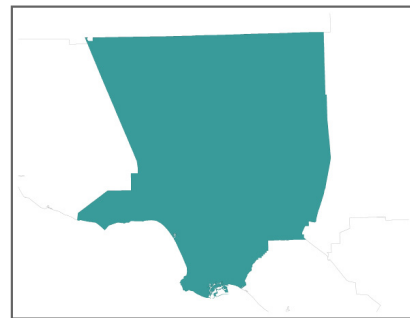
Northern California



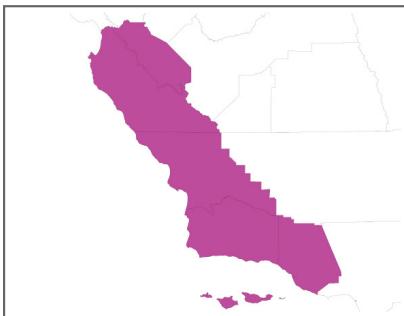
Bay Area



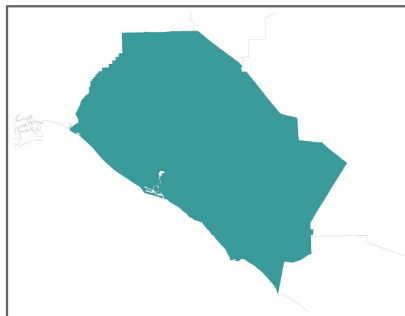
Los Angeles



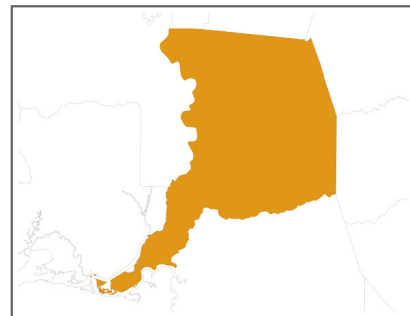
Central Coast



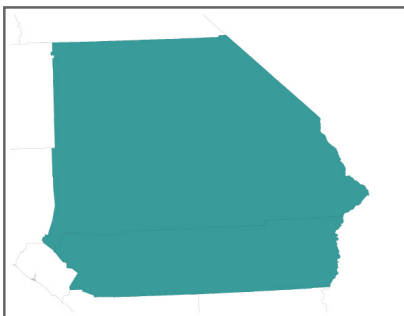
Orange County



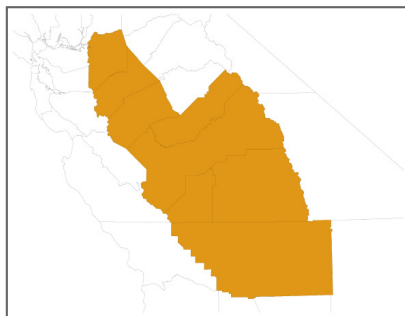
Sacramento



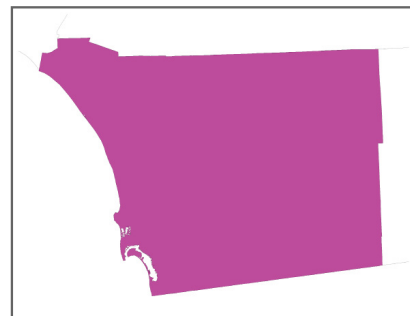
Inland Valley



Central Valley



San Diego



## ■ Introduction

A cornerstone of The California Endowment’s 10-year Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Initiative has been its investment in building “people power.” One of the North Star Goals for BHC is that “historically-excluded adults and youth have voice, agency, and power in public and private decision making to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps.” Discussions within TCE and at Board meetings are laying the foundation for a new strategic plan—and people power will continue to be a priority over the next decade.

At the request from an internal TCE integrated team for transition planning, a cross-department working group was formed to conduct an assessment of the power-building landscape in California. As part of a multi-year grant under the Learning and Evaluation department, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) was brought in and has led the research, analysis, and preparation of this brief. PERE contracted with Active Voice Lab to explore the landscape of grassroots narrative change activities in a separate report (Active Voice Lab 2018). Grassroots Policy Project participated on the working group and provided advice on the research and analysis.

The goals of this brief are to provide a framework for understanding the power-building ecosystem in California; share key observations about local-to-statewide dynamics and capacities that drive policy, systems, and structural changes; and provoke new thinking and approaches to measuring power. In the end, we hope that this project helps TCE leadership to become better informed to make decisions about its goals, strategies, and grant-making beyond 2020. We also hope that this project helps to generate conversations within the field—and between philanthropy and the field—that leads to a more powerful, dynamic, and resilient organizational ecosystem.

## ■ Project Overview

Achieving health and justice for all Californians is beyond the reach of any single organization, strategy, or approach. In fact, it requires an ecosystem of diverse organizations that can collectively influence the broad terrain where ideas, policies, and power are contested. The intent of this project is to push dialogue and decision making to be less about choosing strategies and organizations and more about understanding how different strategies and organizations fit together and how their capacities add up to a power-building ecosystem. Yet choices do need to be made: To which places should resources be deployed? Which organizations are most effective? Which campaigns are most promising? While the Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape Assessment (PLA) will not answer those questions, it is intended to inform discussion between TCE and the field about choice making and sequencing of targeted investments.

### KEY QUESTIONS

#### UNDERSTANDING THE ECOSYSTEM

What organization types and capacities add up to an effective power-building ecosystem? When making strategic investments, what should be taken into consideration about how parts of the ecosystem relate to create movement and change?

#### NURTURING WHAT'S GROWING

What are the emerging opportunities for building and strengthening the voice and influence of historically-excluded communities? Which populations, places, and capacities? How do these opportunities relate to each other?

#### SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

What are the long-term agendas of networks, coalitions, and alliances that are building power across places (local, regional, statewide)? How do short-term policy and systems change issues and priorities align with long-term power-building agendas?

#### MEASURING THE ECOSYSTEM

What are baseline measures or benchmarks—by place, population, or issue—that can be used to guide strategic investments?

#### DEFINING TCE'S ROLE

What is TCE's role within the Health and Justice for All power-building landscape?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The findings in this brief are primarily drawn from analysis of a database of organizations that comprise the power-building ecosystem in California developed for this project; review of literature on organizing, power building, and social movements; discussions within TCE and with external partners; interviews with key leaders from the field, and previous research and interviews with organizers, strategists, organizers, and funders in California dating back to 2008. For a more detailed description of the methodology, please see Detailed Methodology.

## ■ Understanding California's Power-Building Ecosystem

The Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape Assessment (PLA) is anchored by the BHC North Star Goal that “historically-excluded adults and youth have voice, agency, and power in public and private decision making to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps.” Given the focus on people who have been historically excluded from decision making, **organizing and base-building groups are central** to the power-building ecosystem. There are many different models for recruiting and building an active and aligned base of leaders and members who can engage decision makers and keep them accountable. Organizers can reach people where they live, work, study, or worship. Community, youth, union, student, faith-based, and online organizing are the most common types of base-building organizations. (See Selected Resources for a short list of articles on the field of community organizing.)

Yet **organizing and base building alone are insufficient** to influence those who have the authority, resources, and power to make the kinds of decisions that will improve the lives of historically excluded people and reduce inequities. There are multiple scales of decision making ranging from a specific site (e.g., school or workplace) to a city or county to a regional entity (e.g., school district or water district) to the state to the federal level. Additionally, there are distinct decision-making arenas where power is challenged and contested (for more see Pastor, Ito, and Wander 2016):

- **Legislative** decisions are made by both elected officials and policy makers who propose, craft, and approve (or disapprove) laws.
- **Electoral** outcomes are determined by the actions of voters. Voters shape policy indirectly through electing representatives and directly through ballot initiatives.
- **Administrative** decision-makers are executive officials and government staff who oversee and implement laws and rules, coordinate agencies and regulatory bodies, and administer public participation processes. This is the arena that determines the implementation and impact of policies approved in the legislative and electoral arenas.
- **Cultural** arena is where societal values, worldviews, and understandings of the public are shaped.
- **Judicial** decisions are dictated by courts and judges. This is the arena in which the legality of policies and practices are contested.
- **Economic** arena is the private decision-making realm where business management and corporate stakeholders affect outcomes that directly impact workers, families, and communities.



A broader **ecosystem** of organizations with diverse capacities, skills, and expertise—and with reach from the local to regional to the state levels—is required to get to the big goal of health and justice for all. Complementary organizations within the power-building ecosystem include those that focus on leadership development (e.g., political education, personal transformation and healing, trainings); research and legal support; advocacy and policy expertise; communications, messaging, and polling; and arts, culture shifting, and narrative change. There are also individuals, organizations, and programs that support the core operations and sustainability of organizations: organizational development, technology, technical assistance, capacity building, and funders. See Figure 1 for a visualization of the power-building ecosystem.



Figure 1. Types of organizations within the power-building ecosystem

It is important to note that organizations may have the in-house capacities to carry out several of these functions. For example, grassroots leadership development is a core strategy of community organizing groups, thus it is carried out by staff or volunteers of the organization. Yet there are independent leadership development organizations and programs that are part of the power-building ecosystem and play important roles in building voice, leadership, and connection among people who are usually not civically involved. This distinction can be made across all the capacities within the ecosystem.

Alliances and coalitions are critical to the ecosystem yet can be confusing. The same term—“alliance,” “partnership,” “network,” and “coalition”—can hold different meanings to different organizations. Furthermore, such collaborations have many forms and functions. Useful distinctions to make are: Is it a long-term collaboration or time-bound? Is it multi-issue or single-issue focused? Is it led by grassroots organizations or by policy advocates? Do member organizations retain their own identity and internal decision-making processes or do they come under the same brand?

There are several statewide alliances comprised of independent base-building organizations that are building long-term connections across geographies, constituencies, and issues. The same organizations may be involved in short-term, tactical coalitions that come together around a specific campaign then disband. Such coalitions can include organizations that may not otherwise be a core part of the power-building ecosystem—such as social service providers, government agencies, and businesses. There are other alliances and coalitions that are led by social service providers, policy advocacy organizations, and legal advocates.

Which groups are in the power-building ecosystem and which groups are not? To answer this, it is helpful to understand a core premise of the type of organizing that seeks to build power: It involves people in efforts to change their circumstances by altering the root causes that produce

## Voices from the Field

What types of organizations comprise California’s power-building ecosystem?

*“Base-building is primary and all else is ancillary.”*

*“Progressive statewide or regional alliances and coalitions that work together to advance larger statewide shifts...”*

*“Legal strategies are important, so having good legal partners is important.”*

*“...some of the university institutions have been core, such as UC Berkeley and UCLA Labor Center; to providing the data and research background.”*

inequalities and health disparities—the underlying structures, decision-making processes, policies, and priorities. This is distinct from organizations (some services providers and government agencies) that seek to accommodate individuals to be more comfortable within their current circumstances (Christens and Speer 2015).

An intent to address root causes is a guiding principle for evaluating whether or not an organization should be considered part of the ecosystem. In some cases, such as for tribal-serving organizations or in rural regions, social service providers may be the seeds from which to nurture a power-building ecosystem. On specific issues, such as health access or criminal justice, community-based advocacy organizations or single-issue advocacy organizations may be integral partners to a power-building strategy.

Another distinction to clarify is between organization type and **power-building strategies**. Organizations employ multiple strategies in building and wielding power. Below is a list of commonly-used strategies employed by the ecosystem as a whole—note that there is some overlap with organizational types:

- **Advocacy and grassroots lobbying:** Targeting public officials either by directly speaking to them or mobilizing constituents to influence legislative or executive policy decisions (Hathaway and Meyer 1993).
- **Alliance and coalition building:** Shared power, interests, and values among social movement groups are the foundation for authentic collaboration and it can take the form of structured networks or informal relationships to collectively push for a shared vision (Pastor et al. 2011).
- **Arts and culture:** Aims to celebrate the multiple skills of an individual through activities such as writing poetry, dancing, or to name a few. These strategies encourage connection through shared experiences to ultimately create solidarity (Terriquez and Serrano 2018).
- **Campaigns:** A series of organized actions that address a specific purpose, policy, or change. To be most effective, campaigns have clear beginnings and ends, have a clear narrative, the power to reach decision-makers, and may be connected to other campaigns to push larger movement efforts (Pastor et al. 2011).
- **Communications & Narrative Change:** Disseminating messages that resonate with communities affiliated with a movement and--connecting them to an issue and inspiring them to take action based on a movement's values (Pastor et al. 2011).

- **Healing:** Centers improving health and well-being that have been threatened by trauma such as the challenges that come from living historically marginalized communities. A movement can address healing by supporting healthy relationships among members, organizing collective healing circles, and being open to valuing personal hardships while analyzing how they connect to larger social and economic inequalities (Terriquez and Serrano 2018).
- **Inside-outside strategies:** Building a grassroots leadership pipeline into elected or appointed office and once there, providing the ability for them to continue to draw support from organizations on the “outside” and form a team of like-minded lawmakers on the “inside”; this is also about building pipelines to and relationships with government staff (Pastor, Ito, and Wander 2016).
- **Integrated voter engagement:** Connecting organizing and voter engagement strategies to build a strong base over multiple election cycles (Pastor, Perera, and Wander 2013).
- **Leadership development:** Equipping grassroots leaders with the skills, knowledge, and experiences to play a greater role within their movement (Pastor et al. 2011).
- **Litigation:** The use of legal resources or advocacy to reach an intended outcome on a specific case that furthers a movement’s goals and can be used to inform, reframe, and mobilize movements (Sarat and Scheingold 2006).
- **Movement building:** Scaling up from single organizations and issues to long-term initiatives, perspectives, and narratives that seek systems change as opposed to working within systems (Pastor et al. 2011).
- **Organizing and base building:** Building an organized base of grassroots members to mobilize a community towards a common purpose (Pastor, Ito, and Rosner 2011)
- **Research and policy analysis:** May come in many forms. When an organization or movement has a question or issue they are trying to change, they may conduct community assessments or surveys, mapping, census data analysis, policy briefs, or monitoring. These activities can create credibility and can either affirm a movement’s instincts or provide them an opportunity to redirect efforts (Pastor et al. 2011).
- **Social services:** The ability to serve an expansive range of clients—especially those from low income communities—and incorporate their priorities and needs in internal practices and services can be part of a power-building strategy (Building Movement Project 2015).
- **Voter engagement:** Registering, educating, and motivating voters to participate in elections

## ■ Nurturing What's Growing

What are the emerging opportunities for building and strengthening the voice and influence of historically-excluded communities? There is growing reach and connectedness among organizations that are organizing and building power. It has taken time, intention, and patience to nurture power-building organizations from the ground up. Today, the ecosystem has reached such a level of maturity that it can support growth, scaling, and impact much more rapidly than it could have even a decade ago.

One indicator of the maturity is that all 58 counties in California are covered by the power-building ecosystem, with the top 10 counties (in descending order) being Los Angeles, Alameda, San Francisco, San Diego, Santa Clara, Sacramento, Orange, Contra Costa, Fresno, and Riverside. Those with the fewest number of organizations are in the counties at the northern border of the state, such as Sierra, Mono, and Glenn, which are also among the least populous counties of the state.

Central to the power-building ecosystem are the organizing and base-building groups, which comprise 27 percent. In Los Angeles, they comprise 28 percent (65 out of 234) of the power-building ecosystem; in Alameda, 23 percent (43 out of 185); in San Francisco, 23 percent (35 out of 154); in San Diego, 17 percent (18 out of 107). Figure 3 maps the counties that are covered by these organizations (a total of 201 organizations, some of which are working in more than one county).

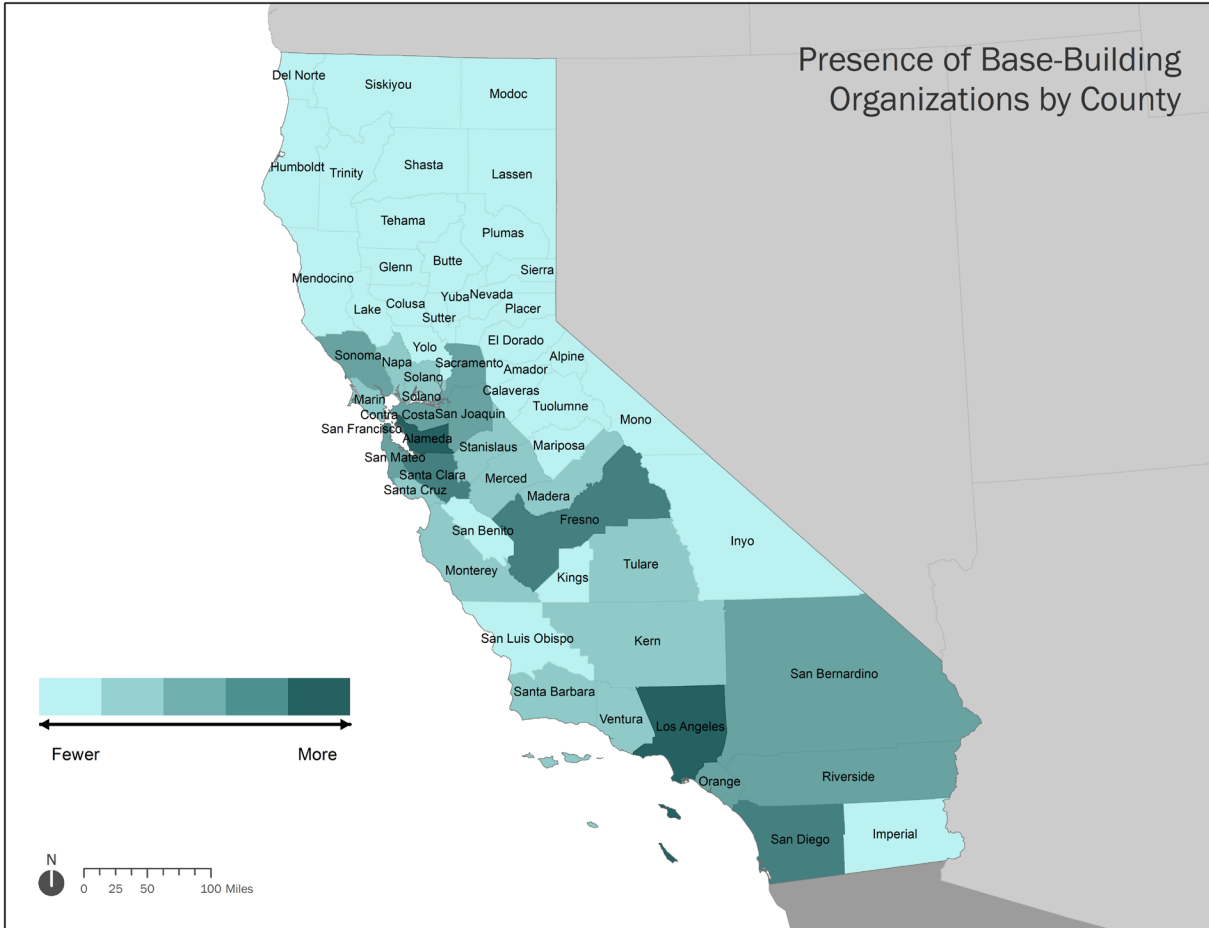
### Voices from the Field

**Challenges within the ecosystem present emerging opportunities**

*"A lot of the power-building groups will be in historic urban centers...but those historic urban centers are getting really expensive... poor people have to leave those places...so there is starting to be a mismatch with where organizations have historically been and where people are having to go."*

*"...organizations are becoming 501(c)4s...[to] engage in the electoral arena in a more direct way than allowed as a 501(c)3. That's creating new opportunities for new partnerships, new funding, new resources, and new access to decision makers."*

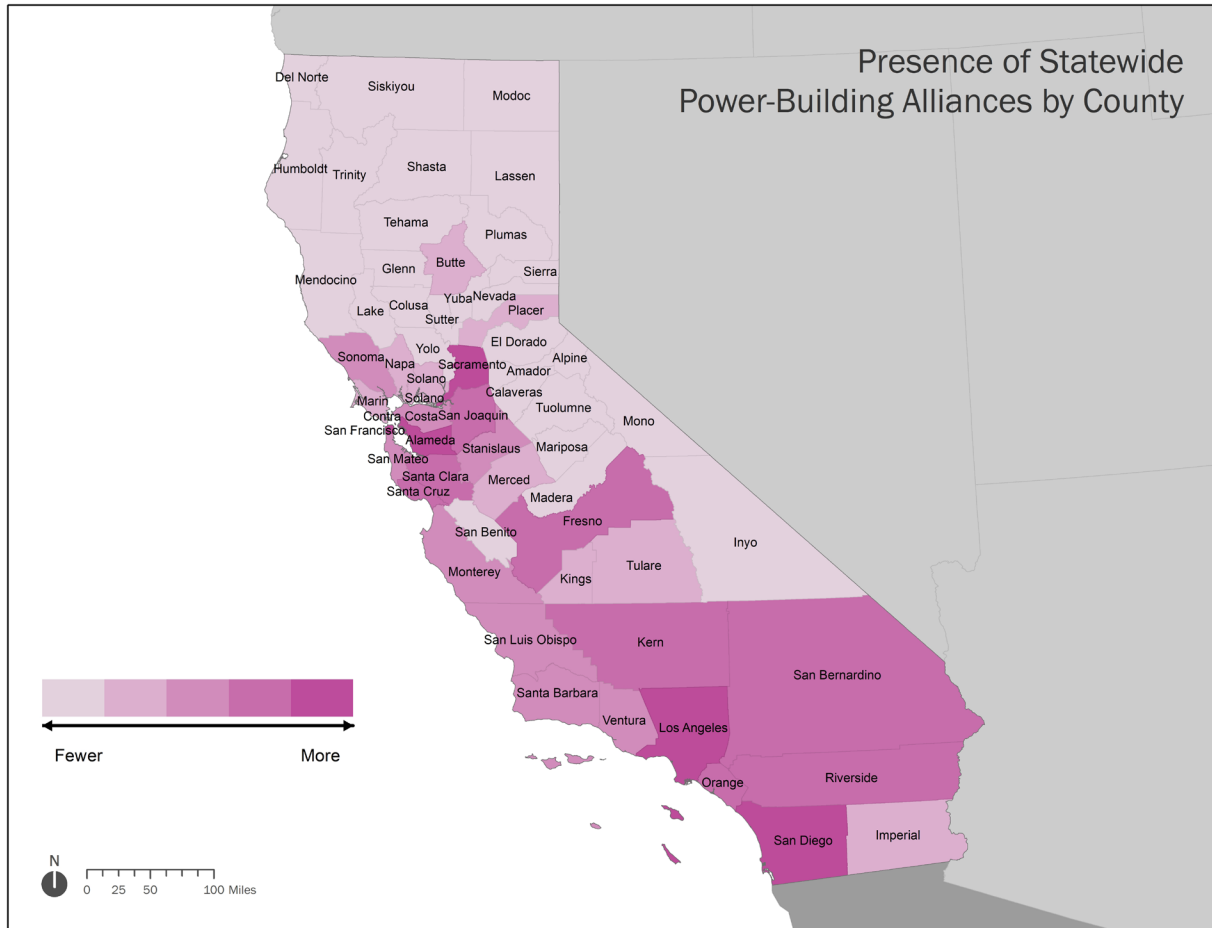
*"...we're strong in the central cities but...Apple, Google, and Facebook are in towns and places where we have no infrastructure, so we have to figure out a suburban organizing model that works."*



Source: USC PERE California Power-Building Ecosystem Database; Natural Breaks (Jenks) classification

*Figure 2. Geographic reach of organizing and base-building organizations in the power-building ecosystem by county*

In addition to the organizing and base-building groups, the power-building organization database contains 164 statewide and 148 national organizations. USC PERE’s and others’ research has found that these types of statewide alliances are key to the power-building ecosystem as they align otherwise disperse local efforts around a shared theory of change and the exercise of building independent political power, together. They do this offering capabilities for leadership development, training, and voter engagement that are widely shared and networked among the member organizations—which feeds into a larger, unified power-building strategy. What this adds up to is a way to leverage local efforts for statewide impact without extracting from grassroots organizations but rather building them up. Figure 3 maps the counties covered by these types of statewide alliances in California.



Source: USC PERE California Power-Building Ecosystem Database; Natural Breaks (Jenks) classification

*Figure 3. Geographic reach of statewide alliances in the power-building ecosystem by county*

What does this mean for philanthropic choice making? While these types of illustrations help start to paint the picture the geographic state of the ecosystem and emerging opportunities, this alone should not be used to make investment decisions. Indeed, all counties and regions are important in the struggle for health and justice. That said, factors to consider for prioritizing and sequencing of the deployment of limited resources across counties include: number and diversity of impacted populations, likelihood of moving a strategic agenda and demonstrating possibilities, and significance to a statewide power-building strategy. Furthermore, the scale of resources deployed to which organizations to do what are dependent upon the contexts and contours of any particular place: its histories, politics, and conditions.

## ■ Seeing the Big Picture

While organizations take on initiatives and campaigns with near-term policy and systems change goals, they are operating within a broader strategy for building power over the long term. And they leverage participation in different alliances and coalitions to do so. There are different approaches to building and consolidating power—and they are not mutually exclusive. Given the growing levels of sophistication within the ecosystem, it is important to consider how to encourage the innovation and experimentation that is emerging from the leading edges of the field.

Some alliances are focused on specializing in particular capacities, such as the ability to do integrated voter engagement for simultaneous local and statewide impact. Others are broadening reach to new constituencies, such as new activists who do not come from historically-marginalized groups yet who are just becoming activated in response to current events. Others are focused on building power on a particular constituency group, such as young people of color, people who were formerly incarcerated, or individuals of specific races and ethnicities.

Of course, a greater number of organizations in the ecosystem allows for more diversification and specialization of roles. With more capacities in a place, organizations are better able to focus their energy and resources on what they do best rather than having to detract from that to fulfill multiple gaps. As the ecosystem matures and evolves in this way, coordination, alignment, and shared learning become increasingly important activities for the ecosystem to undertake.

Regardless of the diversity and differences in the immediate and visible work of the most effective power-building organizations, it is important to assess what they have in

### Voices from the Field

#### How local work is scaled up for statewide impact:

*"[As a coalition] we convene 20 of these organizations throughout the state...to align around agendas, align around goals for elections...we align our 20 organizations to talk to [constituents] around the same priorities."*

*"...Scaling is a set of reinforcing circles...maybe something actually happens at the county that makes the LA City do something, and then the state does something...and it pushes on the city, and then it pushes on the county."*

*"... for base building groups, I think scale literally means how do you get folks to join your movement...[then] create the legal framework to achieve scale."*



common because those characteristics can serve as criteria for evaluating which organizations are ripe for strategic funding and investment. In order to address the geographic and capacity gaps in the ecosystem, it is important to identify which seeds to nurture—which individuals, organizations, or initiatives can anchor a nascent ecosystem. Equally important is identifying which organizations or initiatives, if given additional resources, can provide additional support and scaffolding for the growth, vibrancy, and resilience of the ecosystem as a whole. The following is a starting list of such criteria:

- A focus on, or commitment to, building power among those individuals, neighborhoods, and communities most impacted by barriers to democratic participation and by health inequities—those who have the most to gain in charting a new direction towards health and justice for all;
- A multi-year strategy based on an analysis of power—or at least the recognition of the importance of such a strategy and analysis;
- Participation in strategic alliances and collaborations because they see that it is not effective to work alone and understand the importance of connecting across geographies, constituencies, and issues;
- Intention to build lasting infrastructure and capacities that can pivot to new opportunities.

## ■ Measuring the Ecosystem

The PLA points to an opportunity to push philanthropy and the field toward a new ecosystem-approach to evaluation and measurement. Rather than measuring capacity, effectiveness, and influence of organizations, it is the dynamic ecosystem that should serve as the unit of evaluation.

Looking at the statewide landscape, about 41 percent of all organizations in the power-building ecosystem database are local, 17 percent are regional, 22 percent are statewide, and 20 percent are national. About 27 percent of the organizations are grassroots organizing and base-building organizations. Over three quarters of the organizing groups are multi-issue. So while an organizing group may be waging a campaign around a single issue, like criminal justice, restorative justice, or healthy land use, it may take on other campaigns (simultaneously or sequentially) as community concerns or as opportunities arise.

In addition to understanding the ecosystem, it is important to assess the ecosystem along two dimensions: its alignment around a common vision and agenda and its ability to influence decision-making. Indicators of alignment around a common vision and agenda include the degree to which organizations: share a theory of change, negotiate campaign priorities, and consolidate learnings.

Measurements of the ecosystem's level of influence over decision making can be marked along a spectrum of power from building to influencing to, ultimately, governing. Figure 4 below illustrates what power looks like along this spectrum. Having no or little power means that groups are not on the radar of decision makers. A step up in power, or "building," is an ability to get attention of decision makers, albeit not sustained. The next step up means moving from being considered by decision makers to "influencing" decision making. Finally, "governing" power means moving from having a seat at the table to consistently being able to shape decisions or hold decision-making authority.

### Voices from the Field

#### How success is measured:

*"What new sort of infrastructures or strategies was the organization able to build?"*

*"One indicator of success as an ecosystem would be more about the quality of the ecosystem...so is the ecosystem producing leaders that are from community?"*

*"You win...but now the challenge is how do we make sure that [it] gets implemented in the way that we intended it to when it passed?"*

*"Success has to be...not just a pipeline of future leaders, but making sure that those that want to run for office actually have the monetary resources to do so."*

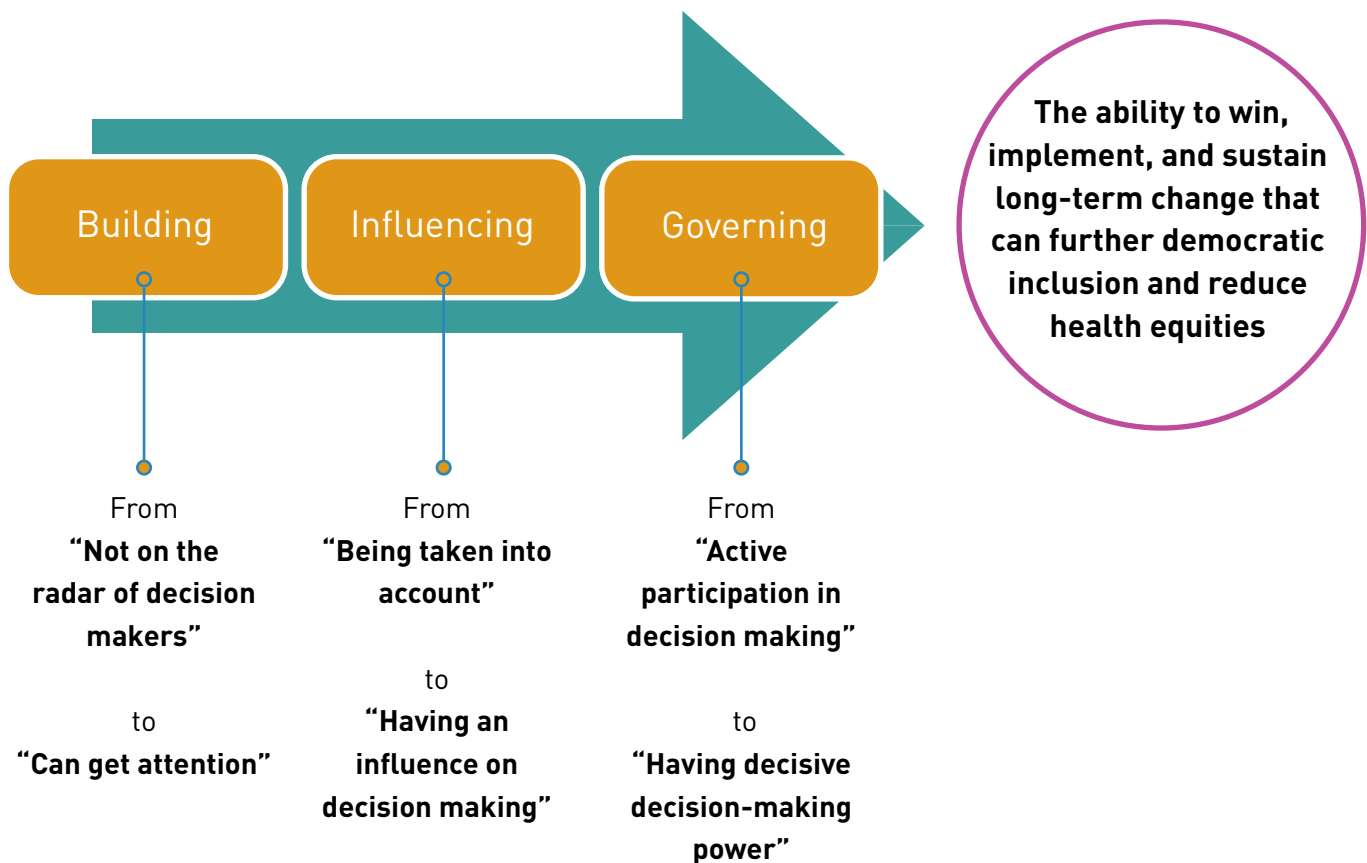


Figure 4. Spectrum of power

Figure 5 offers a starting framework for thinking about pathways to health and justice for all Californians and identifying indicators of progress along the spectrum of power.

As a starting point for discussion, the framework offers pathways by geography, arenas and types of power, and ecosystem capacity. While reality does not unfold so linearly, the point is to have some guideposts along which to evaluate choices and sequencing. The first step along the geographic pathway is to invest where there are historically-excluded populations and communities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. The next step is to build bridges across urban, suburban, and rural communities and to link local, regional, and statewide efforts. Since there are limits to what changes can be achieved at the state level, cross-state collaborations are required to shape national policy, which is particularly important on the issues of health care access and funding, protection of services, and immigration policies.



Figure 5. Framework for Measuring the Ecosystem

The framework lifts up the arenas because this is where strategic targeting and prioritizing may be necessary so as not to stretch resources too thinly. Building power in the legislative and electoral arenas is critical for moving ideas from proposal to policy. Once the policy is won, the judicial and administrative arenas become important for the implementation and protection. Yet the ability to set priorities, shape the public narrative, and shift public understanding shapes the terrain in a way that can open up the possibilities for greater gains. Thus working in the cultural arena can be transformational.

Finally, in terms of the organizational ecosystem itself—in particular, its functions and capacities—building means base building among traditionally-excluded populations as well as providing leadership development, services, and healing. To influence decision making, the complementary parts of the power-building ecosystem form alliances. And to help move from influencing to governing, leadership ladders and lattices are in place to elevate those from marginalized communities into elected and other decision-making positions but are supported by and remain accountable to those communities.

## ■ Conclusions and Considerations

The key question for TCE about its role within the power-building ecosystem. Our previous research has shown that TCE has been contributed to new organizing capacity throughout the state. It is clear that TCE is an influential player within the power-building ecosystem (Ito et al. 2018). In consideration of its strategic investments for the next decade, we recommend a deeper dive into the different regions of California. Each presents a unique environment and context that require different methods of power building capacities. From the Central Valley to the Central Coast, from the border of Oregon to the border of Mexico, TCE's role should consider:

- Centering—not displacing—the importance of one-on-one organizing and base building among excluded populations
- Nurturing—not disrupting—the growing sophistication, connectedness, and reach of organizations building voice, power, and influence
- Tailoring—not imposing—strategic interventions to leverage local power-building efforts for statewide impact.

A next step in this research is to go to the field to survey the base-building organizations that sit at the center of California's power-building ecosystem and to interview key informants to explore the PLA questions in more depth and detail. Through the field research, we will have an opportunity to refine the key power-building concepts and definitions and the types of organizations in the ecosystem. We will explore how the organization types, capacities, and strategies currently add up—and have the potential to add up—to an effective power-building ecosystem.

Additionally, we will select two to three case studies that represent different contexts, geographies, issues, or different approaches to power. Part of the effort is simply to identify and document different approaches to building power under different regional conditions and lessons learned. Another purpose is to identify and document evidence and indicators of voice, agency, and power of historically marginalized communities in decision-making. Through a media scan, interviews with key decision-makers and influencers, and other methods, data will be gathered that allow us to gauge the extent to which grassroots residents are taken into account and how much influence they have over decisions on health equity issues.

Engaging grassroots organizations and alliances, BHC stakeholders, philanthropic allies, and others in the process of developing the Health and Justice For All Power-Building Landscape Assessment will be critical for equipping stakeholders with the same working language and knowledge for a deeper and more inclusive strategic planning process. In the end, we hope that this project helps TCE leadership to become better informed to make decisions about its goals, strategies, and grant-making beyond 2020. We also hope that this project helps to generate conversations within the field—and between philanthropy and the field—that leads to a more powerful, dynamic, and resilient organizational ecosystem.

## ■ Detailed Methodology

To structure the research, a “process framework” was designed and implemented, as shared in Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape: Project Update dated July 19, 2018. Using an iterative approach, the framework was refined and will continue to develop as the research continues into the field through a survey of organizations, key informant interviews, and continued discussions within TCE and with partners.

A major research effort of the PLA has been to identify the organizations that comprise the power-building ecosystem, categorize the organizations by type, identify the scale at which they operate, and understand the strategies they employ. Prior to data collection, a set of nominal and ordinal codes were developed that could best capture general organizational characteristics, such as location by county, and more interpretive factors, such as the power-building strategies. These lists of potential strategies were developed from academic and popular literature reviews on power-building for historically-excluded groups as well as from discussions among the working group.

Building the database started with compiling lists of grantees of key foundations with organizing and civic engagement program areas (e.g., The California Endowment, James Irvine Foundation, Liberty Hill Foundation). As organizations were identified, data fields were filled in utilizing organizational and alliance websites, Guidestar, and PERE’s archival research (including semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation and other qualitative research) on organizational characteristics. Descriptive statistics were run, including cross-tabulations of key axes of the framework, such as grassroots organizing/alliance building (i.e. central power-building groups) and groups working with low-income and communities of color/immigrants (i.e. historically-marginalized groups).

As part of the iterative process of identifying, studying and producing initial descriptive statistical analysis on the characteristics of organizations, gaps surfaced in the ecosystem. Based on data checks for gaps in populations and geographies, we expanded the list to include population-specific funders and organizations (e.g., Women’s Foundation of California, LGBTQ, disability rights) and geographic-specific funders (e.g., California Community Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation). We also identified organizational affiliates of power-building alliances such as California Calls, PICO California, Power California, Million Voters Project, and more. Using a snowball sampling methodology, network connections were followed in order to identify more power building groups throughout the state.

All data is organized in an excel-based “ecosystem database.” As of October 2019, the database has over 740 organizations. Variables include: organizational website; organization type; target constituencies; single or multi-issue focus; geographic reach and location; membership in key alliances, coalitions, or networks; power-building strategies; and decision-making arenas.

A limitation of this method is that the database is skewed to foundation-funded 501(c)3 organizations. Key sectors of the ecosystem are under-represented including other legal entities, such as 501(c)4, labor unions, political action committees, LLCs, firms, political parties, and churches; informal, loosely-organized groups; and emerging and newly-forming organizations. In some cases of labor union locals and local faith-based congregations, the statewide or regional entity is included in the dataset. The database is continually being refined to best capture the diversity of the power-building ecosystem.

To supplement data from the ecosystem database, in July and August of 2019, we embarked on a series of interviews with key individuals in the field. The goal of these conversations was to gauge how leaders from key organizing groups, alliances, and foundations perceived the different aspects on the power-building ecosystem.

Interviewees were asked to share their insights on: 1) the current state of the ecosystem, such as who the players are, what challenges and/or opportunities exist, 2) the meaning of and methods behind scaling local work for statewide impact, 3) how to measure the impacts of the ecosystem, and 4) what the unique role of foundations is in the effort to build power. The process of gathering the list of interviewees included consulting with TCE partners and assessing internally at USC PERE about how to best represent key constituencies, geographies, and power-building strategies. Out of 18 individuals contacted for this effort, nine were eventually interviewed. Each interview was conducted via phone or by video-chat and eight were recorded for note-taking purposes.

#### LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

- **California Native Vote Project**, Chrissie Castro
- **California Native Vote Project**, Jesus (Jesse) Fraire
- **Cid & Macedo, Inc.**, Amparo Cid
- **Jakara Movement**, Deep Singh
- **Power California**, Jung Hee Choi
- **The Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment**, Caroline Farrell
- **The James Irvine Foundation**, Charles Fields
- **Warehouse Workers Resource Center**, Sheheryar Kaoosji
- **Working Partnerships USA**, Derecka Mehrens



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## ■ Project Partners

### USC PERE PROJECT TEAM

**Robert Chlala**

*PhD Student and Research Assistant*

**Jennifer Ito**

*Research Director*

**Dalia Lorena Gonzalez Lomeli**

*Project Assistant*

**Cynthia Moreno**

*Data Analyst*

**Stina Rosenquist**

*Research Assistant*

**Rachel Rosner**

*Research Assistant*

**Sandy Southivilay**

*Research Assistant*

**Kim Tabari**

*Project Manager*

**Madeline Wander**

*Senior Data Analyst*

### THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT (TCE) WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

**Alex Desautels**

*Program Manager*

**Judi Larsen**

*Senior Program Manager*

**Lori Nascimento**

*Learning and Evaluation Manager*

**Janine Saunders**

*Director of Learning and Evaluation*

**Jonathan Tran**

*Program Manager*

### GRASSROOTS POLICY PROJECT

**Richard Healey**

*Executive Director*

**María Poblet**

*Deputy Director*

### REPORT DESIGNERS

**Sabrina Kim**

*USC PERE Data Analyst*

**Gretchen Goetz**

*Graphic Design Consultant*

**USC**  
**Dornsife**  
*Program for  
Environmental and  
Regional Equity*

**Program for Environmental and Regional Equity  
(PERE)**

950 W. Jefferson Blvd., JEF 102

Los Angeles, CA 90089-1291

Phone: (213) 740 - 3643

Email: [pere@dornsife.usc.edu](mailto:pere@dornsife.usc.edu)

Web: [dornsife.usc.edu/pere](http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere)

Subscribe to: [our newsletter](#)

