



**San Joaquin Valley Leadership Conference  
October 12, 2017**

**Respondent Panel Notes**

**Community Respondents Pt. 1**

*Moderator:* Socorro Santillan, Program Officer, Sierra Health Foundation

*Panelists:* Luis Santana, Executive Director, Reading and Beyond  
Lange Luntao, Board Trustee, Stockton Unified School District  
Daniel O'Connell, Land Trust Director, Fresno Food Commons  
Sarah Ramirez, Executive Director, FoodLink for Tulare County, Inc.

Were you surprised?

- A lot of us live this data.
- How can we help kids who are so far behind? -> Gaps widen
- Migrant worker families mean kids aren't in preschool = behind
- SJ County: 70% of eligible kids are not enrolled in subsidized preschool
  - What are the obstacles to getting the word out about existing resources?
- If we don't improve their parents' lives, the children's situations won't improve
- The Report can help us to bring up issues and move to action
- Family members dying and dealing with chronic diseases – not only about the number of doctors, but about food access, other challenges – e.g. school food
- Corporatization of food banks and donations
- Paradox of highest food-producing region having high food insecurity and poverty
- Functional feudalism – voting rights
- Incarceration in the Valley

Why is it important to invest in the SJ Valley?

- We have a lot of investment, but political inequality
- Community ownership and democratization of capital – promote equity and vertical integration
- We are exporting all of our wealth
- Better question: How are we going to invest in the Valley?
- Inequities go back decades – investments haven't changed the institutions
- There is a need for direct service investment, but in ways that make connections and institutional change
- We cannot get different results doing the same things
- Resources need to come over the long term and to new kinds of organizations
- Our counties are still struggling to invest in our young minds
- It is incumbent on all of us to coordinate our work in ways that make sense to our residents

### What are the challenges in your communities in responding?

- The way we are funded – not sure LCFF results are there
- Coordination – grantmaking structures
- Federal cuts – e.g. SNAP
- Changing and challenging expectations
- Responses from political leaders and beliefs about who “deserves” help
- Political representation not in the public interest – they don’t believe that government should help us – elect better representatives

### Conversation and Q&A

- New partnerships and sharing resources, e.g. using food bank kitchen for early childhood food providers, providing excess produce
  - How do we change policies to better meet our needs
- Self-sufficiency – bring and invest in skills
  - How can we bring resources?
- Many of our institutions are traumatized (e.g. schools) – hard to innovate
  - As leaders, it is our responsibility to model
  - What rights do we want to ensure our children? (e.g., San Joaquin County Children’s Bill of Rights)
- Our communities can articulate the policies we want
- Trust our communities and invite dialogue
- The Valley can go beyond the rest of the state / U.S.

### Challenges and Opportunities

- Mismanagement and underinvestment -> insecurity and inconsistency
  - Having hard conversations about how to do basic services differently
- Allocating LCFF funds to intended populations
- Seeking policy systems change and funding advocacy and new ways to work
  - AB 219, but doesn’t solve all problems
- Working in places of historic trauma and bringing hope
  - Transformative Climate process
  - Listening to residents

### How are you engaging community in your work?

- Bringing those values into the organization and getting everyone in the org involved
- Creating opportunities to hear grassroots voices
- Find allies in your community and meet them where they are
- LCFF as venue to engage parents
  - Link to their children’s needs
- Be humble and empower others
- Be with the community

### How do we shift debate to addressing concentrated wealth?

- Inequitable economic systems undermine democracy and illustrate weak democracy
- LCFF is a game-changer for our communities
- How are we sharing our bounty to make sure most resources go to those most in need?
- We are not being as innovative as we can be

How do small and rural cities partner with school districts? (especially to implement preschool and pre-K programs)

- Partnership to leverage resources

What are ways to hold public sector accountable for outcomes?

- Continue talking and have credibility with them
- Data – share out to the community => demand that they show us
- Community organizing over the long term
- Reach out and invite them to do the work

## **Community Respondents Pt. 2**

*Moderator:* Fatima Angeles, Vice President of Programs, The California Wellness Foundation

*Panelists:* Angel Garcia, Tulare Community Organizer, Californians for Pesticide Reform  
Caroline Farrell, Executive Director, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment  
Hector Lara, Director, South Stockton Promise Zone

What did you learn from the report that surprised or inspired?

- Conversations it has sparked
  - Started dialogue
  - It's a benchmark
- Reminded of what Valley communities have in common
- Environment section reflects lived experience
- Communities experience all these issues
  - See how they all affect people's lives
- Intersectionality with the issues are related
  - We can build local coalitions to create change and paradigm shift

What has been particularly challenging? What is getting in the way?

- Hegemonic ideas: There's certain way only of doing something, and our problems are normalized
  - Educate the public
- Narrative: Jobs vs. the environment
  - False choice, doesn't reflect actual lived experience
- Increase of fear
  - Discomfort in public spaces
  - Organizing against "non-sanctuary"
- Lack of trust and organizational trauma
  - Trust in each other, clients, themselves
  - Work through experiences until they can get to partnership and trust

What has been key strategy, and what are you doing that's new?

- Opportunity to work with community groups and connect them to each other
- Ability to work regionally
- Exploring political activity (c4)
- Intersectional alliances
  - Strengthening on an ongoing basis
- Coalition around a shared goal

- Idea of community empowerment
  - Validation of lived experience
- Leverage “protest climate” to unite and push our issues as a coalition
- Support from elected officials
  - Get partners to the table
- Investing in partners and residents
  - Going back to them to ask what they want, get thoughts on how to move forward
- Residents to build trust working with

What do you need and what do you WANT to do?

- Momentum is on our side → banning dangerous chemicals
  - Community push
  - Real-life experience matters
- Investment in resident empowerment, invest in people
  - Residents should run the table → power
  - Hold leaders accountable
- Hope for Valley-wide coalition on water and the Delta?
  - The need to change parameters of debate
    - Expand choices
    - Equitable use of resources
- Build alliances with nontraditional partners (e.g. tribes in NorCal)

### **Community Respondents Pt. 3**

*Moderator:* Fatima Angeles, Vice President of Programs, The California Wellness Foundation

*Panelists:* Councilman Jesús M. Andrade, District 6, City of Stockton  
 Pedro Hernandez, Policy Advocate, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability  
 Erin Reynolds, Community Outreach Coordinator, Public Health Advocates  
 Mayor Pro-Tempore Gary Singh, City of Manteca

What surprised and inspired?

- We see all of this every day in the community → confirms need for change
- Disseminating info with residents and funders
- This hit home
- We can come together around solutions
- Educating community and leaders
- Crisis around housing affordability
  - Related to 65k commuters
- Disinvestment, pollution in rural communities
- Scope of full Valley and individual counties → allows us to use at best scale and organize
- We all have to do the work and chip away in our communities
- Trust and relationship building in our communities so that they engage
  - Takes time and money, but they become leaders

Where are you going and what’s getting in the way?

- Reversing 50 years of neglect
- Getting beyond old divides and narratives
- Trying to create resilient communities

- Political will to implement and champion community input
- Organizing after decades of disadvantage
- Inability of small communities to pay for what they need
- Real community outreach – more than posting on a website → implementing best practices
- How do we stop this from happening? Equitable land use
  - Build complete neighborhoods with diverse housing, no artificial divide

What has worked, and what are you trying now?

- Taking advantage of a huge crisis (the bankruptcy) → created chance for new leadership
- We communicate the decisions we make
- We are in a unique place to shape how we move up
- Working with purpose toward an end goal
- Interdisciplinary strategy, combine expertise
- Community education → movement building
- Driven by community priorities
- Save for a rainy day
- Understand needs of the future

What do you need?

- Continued investment in our people
- Money
- Attention and sharing resources in other regions
  - Valley is urbanizing and has cities already
  - Tied to other economies
- Expand focus outside of cities
  - Unincorporated areas
  - Have a lot of needs
- Operate in meaningful coalitions
- Understand our power
- Commercial and industrial growth
  - Have the workforce and the land

How can we reach goals without money? Bring in investment

- Foundations can't be the full answer
- Write policy for existing public money
- Make sure our communities are visible when money is available
- Work on community plans
- Start with institutions (look internally) that have resources (schools, cities, counties) and make them innovative
- Believe in our human capacity