

Stories from the Field

Electrification of Low-Income Homes



THE PROBLEM

A just and equitable transition to a clean energy economy means that everyone can participate. How can we help low-income families that already spend a disproportionate amount of their income on energy bills to join the transition? How can we make it affordable and easy to benefit from clean energy technologies that makes homes healthier and more resilient?

Our team set out to understand the priorities and concerns when considering clean energy upgrades within the low-income communities of Bassett and Avocado Heights. Our objective was to **provide no-cost solar, battery storage, and electrification upgrades**, but first we had to **identify and overcome barriers and challenges to decarbonizing low-income households**.

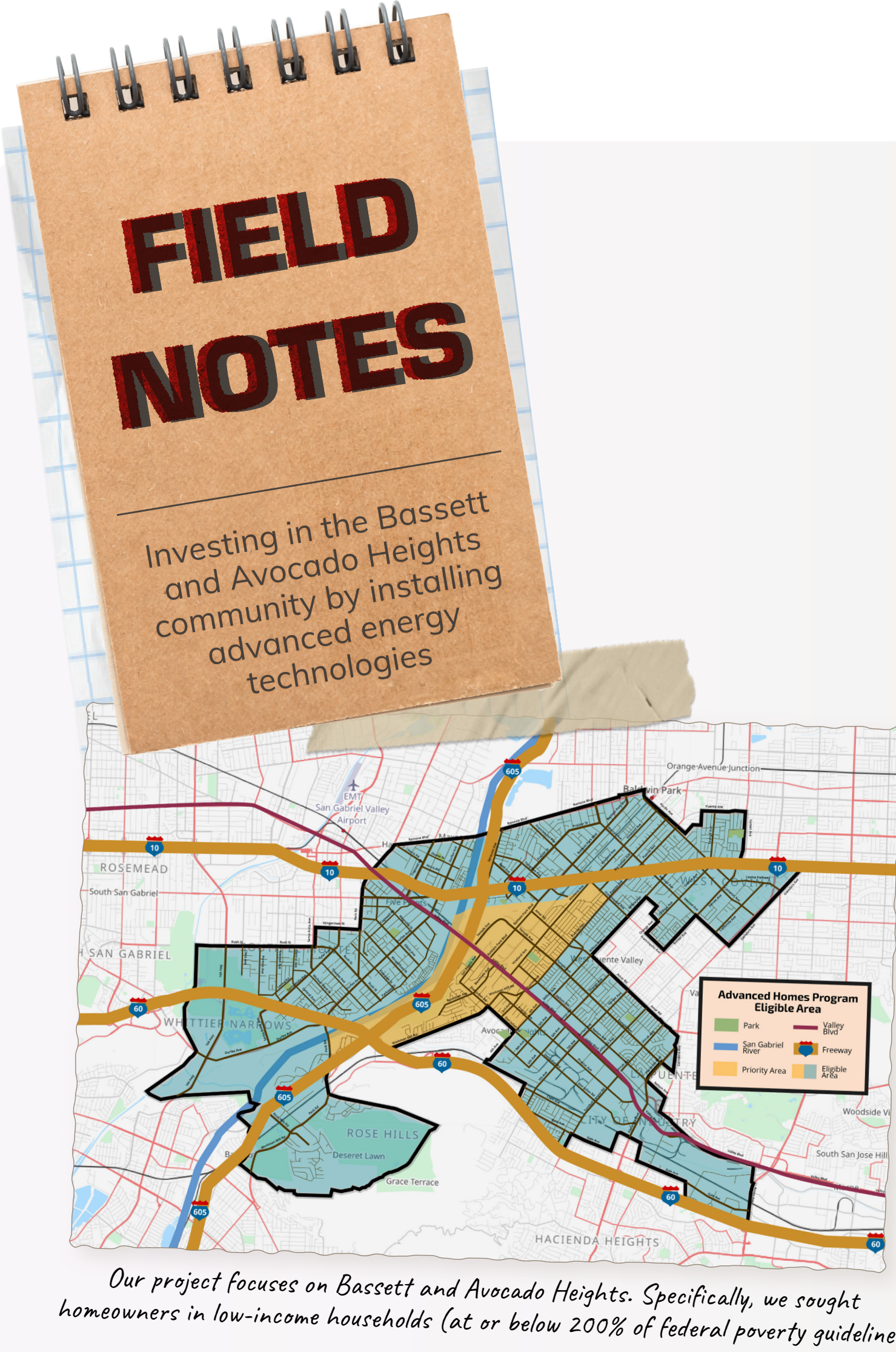
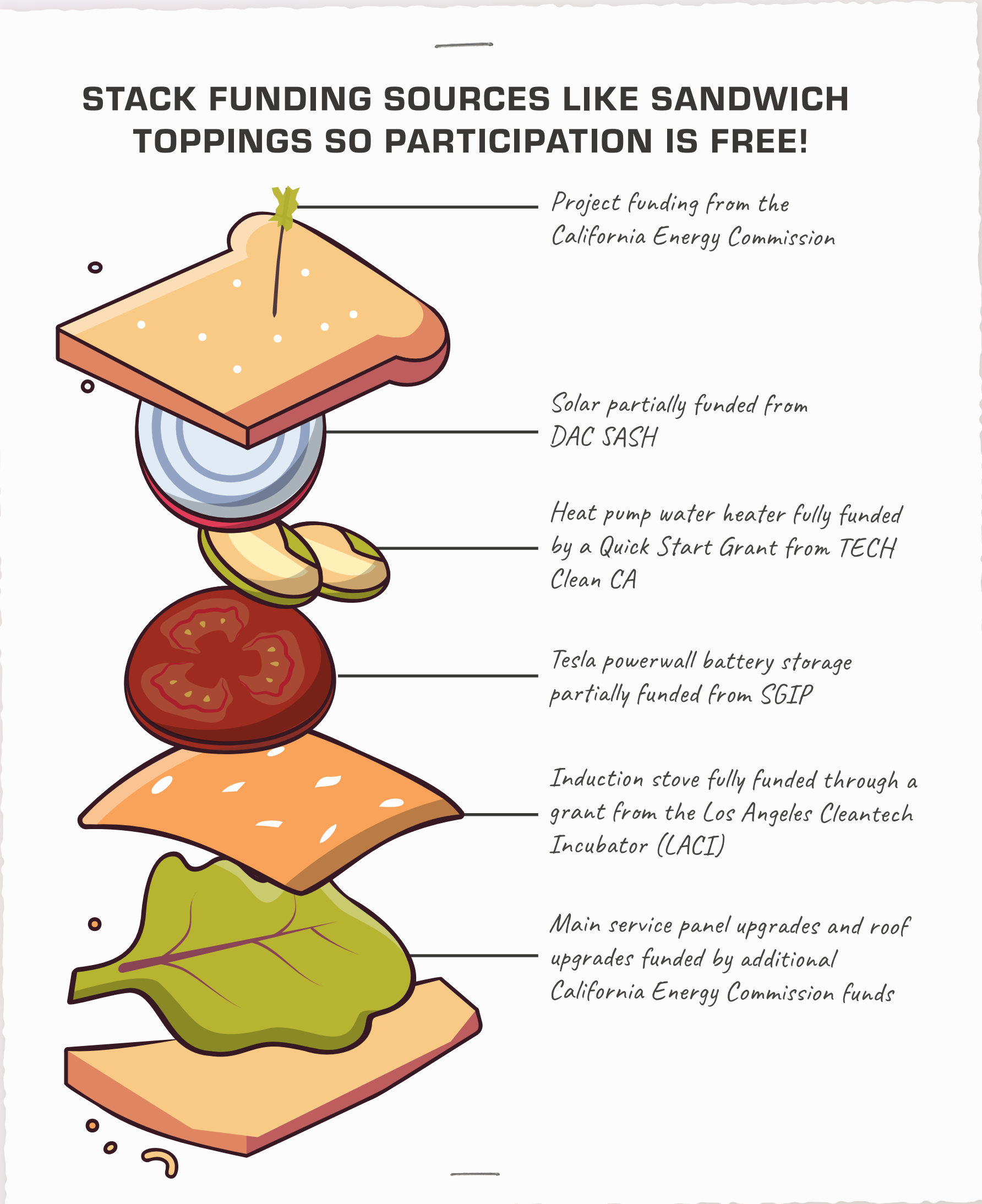
THE SOLUTION

Start with a **community-led** approach. **Assemble a team** of nonprofits, community organizations, and energy technology leaders to bring together the local community to transform their neighborhood. **Engage community stakeholders early** to build trust and authentically connect with people. **Embed education from the start** to clearly explain the project's benefits. **Create a positive participant experience** by supporting technology installation from start to finish with a turnkey case-management mindset. Strive to **build wealth**; design the program so participants' bills stay the same (or decrease!) by tapping into multiple sources of funding and incentives.

THE APPROACH



Our approach to creating a community of advanced homes has been to partner with the local community. Our coalition includes Los Angeles County, the local school district, a community advisory committee, community-based organizations, and technical partners.



Advanced Homes program participant Juan Gonzalez on battery storage installation day at his home



Young community members collecting advanced energy community buttons and other giveaways to remind them to save energy at home!



The Bassett Avocado Heights Advanced Energy Community team celebrates at Juan Gonzalez's home on battery installation day.



A Sunrun solar panel system installed by our project partner, GRID Alternatives



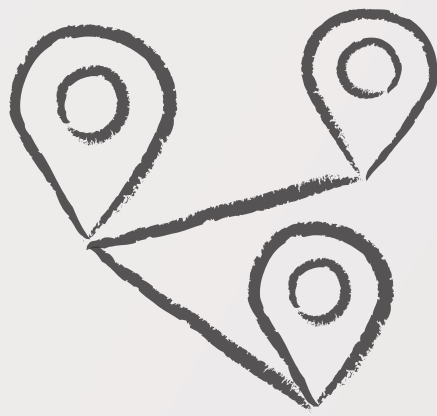
Tesla battery storage installed at a program participant's home (left) and community members enjoying the neighborhood (right)

THE INITIAL INSIGHTS

THE KEY TO BUILDING TRUST IS ENGAGING WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Our most successful community engagement has come from local, trusted stakeholders such as the school district. Recommendation: engage with respected community members as early as possible.

We found that most eligible households are elderly homeowners with fixed incomes. Recommendation: work with the community to better understand who the customer is and adapt your program accordingly.



BE WILLING TO ADAPT SERVICES TO MEET COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS

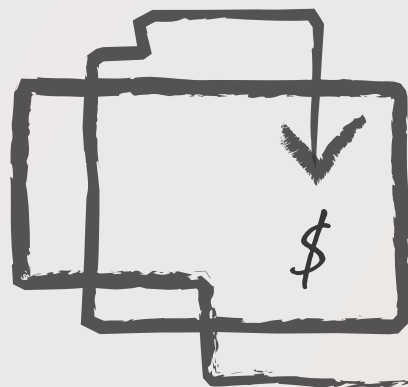
We quickly realized that a case management approach would be the best way to keep program participants engaged, prevent drop off, and ensure a positive customer experience. Recommendation: work with the community throughout the project, not just at the start.

We saw that many homeowners weren't able to participate in our program due to unpermitted structures, old roofs, or outdated electrical service panels. Recommendation: be prepared to provide wrap around services that address health, safety, and social and economic concerns.



MORE FUNDING SOURCES = MORE COMPLEXITY

Meeting requirements for all the financial resources we pooled together for this project certainly added some complexity! Recommendation: align financial resources with similar timelines to make things easier to manage and to create a better experience for program participants.



The Energy Coalition (TEC) is a California-based nonprofit with nearly 50 years of experience designing and implementing programs that empower communities to leap into the future of clean energy. We secured grant funding from the California Energy Commission to implement the Bassett Avocado Heights Advanced Energy Community, which will help local residents save money on energy bills, reduce pollution, and demonstrate a just transition to our clean energy future.

LEARN MORE →

energycoalition.org

advancedenergycommunity.org