From Pilot Grant to Practice: Rural Resilience in the Valleys

Cuyama and Pajaro Valleys

Speakers: Julianna Joss, Em Johnson, Tara Saylor, Maria Perez

- Both recipients of the Transformative Climate Communities Grant (TCC)
    - Pajaro - Round 4 Planning Grant | County of Monterey - Climate Prosperity for Pajaro Valley
    - Cuyama - Round 5 of Development Grant | County of Santa Barbara - Resilient Cuyama Valley Initiative
- Pajaro, March 2023, an atmospheric river caused flooding in the county.
    - Homes, belongings, and sources of income (agricultural field work) were impacted
    - Students were evacuated to unfamiliar schools
    - Their water systems were contaminated, mud wrecked their homes, etc.
    - Many folks were displaced to nearby towns
    - The levee is being repaired, but the results are unknown due to the upcoming weather phenomenon
- Through the grant, the Pajaro Community Climate Coalition (CCC) was formed
    - The coalition featured residents and conducted community outreach, building community advocacy groups.
- Priority Recommendations were taken from their residents during community outreach events
    - They heard about food access, pedestrian safety, green spaces, etc.
- Despite being 10 minutes away from the beach, many families have never gone.
- Regeneracion is applying once again for the TCC grant

Resilient Cuyama Valley Initiative

- Their efforts are guided towards incorporating the Cuyama Valley to Santa Barbara County
- Building a robust workforce is part of Cuyama's goals with the grants
- Program is investing in programs that their communities are asking for such as housing, accessible facilities, and locally available healthy food, livable wages, improved working conditions, etc.
- Workforce development efforts are being tied into their retrofit programs that update wildly outdated systems in resident homes, giving opportunities for the community to gain experience on the job
- Paying folks at every step of the way is a priority, to keep everyone involved and contributing to the economic development of their communities

Panel Questions

- Benefits/Challenges Short/Long term

    - Bureaucratic processes can be difficult to maneuver, including local partnerships as well as state/federal departments
- In Cuyama, the Home is the Center of Resilience
- Communities realize that energy usage is important, but in comparison to all their immediate issues, it might not be a priority
    - Energy bills are expensive, but they don't know where to start
    - Renters may want to use solar, but it is not up to them
    - Energy bills are frequently high, no matter their practices
- How do your projects leverage funding and creatively use resources?
    - Planning grant, they reach out to local partners to leverage resources by asking local partners for anything they can donate to their events
    - Stacking incentives
- What were the lessons learned, and what will you take with you moving forward?
    - You need to continue working through impending disasters
    - Rural communities can also be the center of innovations
    - Improving cuyama so that generations of families can stay in cuyama through economic development and higher levels of education
    - Multilingial support is always needed
    - Community relevance and sesnsitivity
    - Unincorporated and rural communities face barriers to access matching funds

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