

CONVENING SUMMARY: LA

Catalyst Convening Summary: LA Region

Last updated: April 10, 2025

Overview

In 2023 and 2024, the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) hosted the Catalyst Conference as a two-day, large-scale conference in Sacramento. The Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) (formally Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)) also facilitated a statewide Climate Next Conference as well as local government roundtables in recent years. In all these events, there were requests from participants for opportunities to engage at the regional level. Both organizations recognized the demand for a regional approach to engaging with local governments and partners to facilitate stronger communication and gain a better understanding of regional needs. They also see value in empowering local tribal, technical assistance, and environmental justice partners in planning and executing projects and investment decisions.

The regional Catalyst Convenings serve as a continuation of the commitments made at the 2023 and 2024 SGC Catalyst Conference, LCI's Climate Nexus Conference, and LCI-hosted local government roundtables. The Convenings feature elements are planned in coordination with the [California Climate and Energy Collaborative](#) and [UC Berkeley's Possibility Lab](#).

Across diverse regions of California, partners consistently identified the need for improved collaboration, capacity building, and equally accessible funding mechanisms to address climate resilience and community needs.

Based on outcomes of past LCI and SGC events, a statewide planning workshop, and follow-up planning meetings with representatives from the LA region, the following elements were used to inform the structure of the LA-region Convening:

- o **Region-led discussions** on current issues and opportunities.
- o **Roundtable workshop** to identify consensus and develop actions on topics identified as a priority by each region.
- o **Sharing state and regional resources**, including funding opportunities, incentives and upcoming engagement opportunities.

In addition, key considerations in planning the regional Convenings included to:

- o Strive for every attendee to make new connections with people outside of their traditional network.
- o Create space for regional participants to build one-on-one relationships with state and with peer leaders from around the region.
- o Honor regional participants' time and effort by providing food and honorariums.
- o Ensure regional convenings hosted by the state are complementary to those hosted by regions themselves.
- o Spark participants' excitement and creativity with new engagement tools.
- o Recognize the importance of regional expertise by including regional leaders as keynote speakers.
- o Show regional participants what regional input the state has turned into action so far; clarify where input is still needed.

LA-Region Convening Details

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

CSU Long Beach, Pointe Conference Center

Intended Audience & Registration Analysis

Local governments and other regional partners including Tribal governments, community-based organizations, and assistance providers.

Organization Type	Count
Nonprofit	34
State government	33
Local government	25
Academia	18
Consulting	16
Community-based organization	14
Utility or Community Choice Aggregators (CCA)	7
Regional government	6
Philanthropy	5
Economic/ Community Development Organization	4
Other: TA providers, Developers, Finance/Banking, & Federal Government	6

Meeting Purpose and Agenda

Overview

Representatives from local and regional governments, Tribal governments, community-based organizations, philanthropic foundations, and institutions of higher education are invited – alongside key state agencies – to coordinate on the region’s energy, land use, climate barriers, and solutions.

Convening Goals

- Understand the bioregion and explore specific regional issues
- Facilitate two-way conversations on climate, land use, and energy
- Enable regions to have space to inform and co-create policies with actionable recommendations
- Create opportunities for state agencies and program teams to share funding, incentives, opportunities to engage, and other resources available to the region

Agenda

The agenda included three main agenda components, which were informed by planning sessions with representatives from each region:

Title	Speakers
Welcome to event and overview of day	Adrienne Moretz , California Strategic Growth Council Special Advisor, Innovation & Partnerships
Presentation: The Region's Future Climate with the California Fifth Climate Change Assessment	Jesse Norris , California Fifth Climate Change Assessment Coordinating Lead Author
Panel: Characterizing the Region	Adrienne Moretz , California Strategic Growth Council Special Advisor, Innovation & Partnerships Shaun Randolph , LA n Sync, California Community Foundation Program Officer Rita Kampalath , LA County Chief Sustainability Officer James Suazo , Long Beach Forward Executive Director
Workshop: The Region's Priorities, Challenges, and Assets	Angie Hacker , Statewide Best Practices Coordinator, Civic Well; CEO & Principal Consultant, Prosper Sustainably
Breakout Room Discussion: LA Fire Recovery & Resilience	Natalie Kuffel , Governor's Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation Deputy Director of Land Policy Ankitha Doddanari , Governor's Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation Research Data Specialist Matt Gonser , LA County Climate Resilience Officer Dania Gutierrez , National Forest Foundation Southern California Program Director Deborah Bloome , Accelerate Resilience Los Angeles (ARLA) Senior Policy Director
Breakout Room Discussion: Active & People- Centric Transportation	Conversation led by SGC Transformative Climate Communities Team
Breakout Room Discussion: Energy Resilience and Affordability	Kelsey Wolf-Cloud , Civic Well Climate Change & Energy Senior Project Manager Nataly Morales Sandoval , Orange County Power Authority Energy Programs Analyst John Spector , Clean Power Alliance Resilience & Grants Program Manager Anna Jane Jones , California Strategic Growth Council Program Manager, Community Resilience Centers
Executive Welcome	Erin Curtis , CA Strategic Growth Council Executive Director
Roundtable Workshop	UC Berkeley's Possibility Lab
Panel: Funding the Future	Angie Hacker , Prosper Sustainably CEO & Principal Consultant Amar Azucena Cid , California Strategic Growth Council Deputy Director for Community Investment and Planning Trinity Tran , California Public Banking Alliance Co-Founder Geoff Ross , Horne Deputy State & Federal Programs
Resource Fair	

Convening Summary

Key Takeaways

Characterizing the Region's Priorities, Assets, and Challenges

Registrants described the services they offer, as well as the services they need as part of characterizing the region.

Land Use, Climate, and Energy Needs & Services	I need this	I offer this
Energy efficiency, electrification	27	14
Climate and/or energy action planning	21	12
Sustainable development, housing, and transportation planning and land use	21	6
Climate adaptation and resilience planning	22	9
Climate adaptation and resilience implementation	23	9
Organizational development and grant writing	21	9
Sustainable Agriculture	16	7
Affordable housing, smart growth, planning and land use	21	8
Utility Capacity and Grid Management	14	8
Renewable energy, storage and energy resilience	25	14
Electric vehicle and charging stations	24	14

The California Climate and Energy Collaborate (CCEC) facilitated a session with participants who prioritized their top land use, climate, and energy priorities based on information they submitted through registration.

Topics for conversation during the Convening were elevated through planning meetings and speakers were elevated through the registration process. Key takeaways from these discussions include:

Characterizing the Region Opening Panel

- o Want residents to be able to point to a project in their community and be able to say, "I was a part of making that happen." Shared ownership, community ownership, and worker ownership all lead to more community pride and widespread benefits.
- o Participatory budgeting is a way to move from idea to implementation. Align on vision and the how: explicitly figure out how we share power, money, and resources.
- o Bring people who are impacted into the decisions regarding housing, transportation, education. De-silo these issues and recognize at the intersections, help people understand intersections and cumulative impact of the challenges in Long Beach.

Energy Resilience and Affordability Breakout Room Discussion

- Grant programs should have more flexible applicant criteria to allow for more community choice aggregators and other community advocates to receive and distribute funding.
- There is an interest in incentivizing solar projects for community businesses and homeowners.

- A toolkit for navigating solar installation contractors that are legitimate and trusted would be useful, to help repair mindsets towards solar, since many people are negatively impacted by bad actors in the solar industry.

Fire Recovery & Rebuilding Breakout Room Discussion

- For defensible space, it is recommended to create buffers of 5-15 ft or even 30 ft (a mile in Wild-Urban-Interface) around buildings with native and climate-appropriate plants in abundance, to cover about 80% of your landscape at maturity. Build in rain gardens or shallow depressions (large cisterns in rural areas) to catch rain when it comes, and that creates healthy soil. That's what holds water in the root zone and creates wildfire resilience. Stored water can be deployed during high fire risk to wet soil and extinguish embers.
- Officially recognize the many co-benefits of climate-resilient approaches and incentivize them via grants/programs in a comprehensive way across agencies and utilities, so that the resilience upgrades are largely publicly funded and therefore accessible to everyone.
- When change is coming at us, the no-action alternative really isn't a choice. We have choices to improve community and environmental conditions and to make natural infrastructure better so they can help with conditions.

Active Transportation Breakout Room Discussion

- Where possible, flexibility in the definition of project areas can support broader community resilience.
- Consider creating a universal grant application database, where applicants can find and apply to other funding opportunities and complete all grant reporting requirements in a centralized location.
- Community engagement looks different in every community. Where possible, leveraging new and innovative strategies to reach diverse and vulnerable communities is crucial. Some strategies include community events that foster community trust and relationship building and using more plain language to encourage accessibility and inclusion when discussing climate change and its impacts.

Funding Panel Discussion

- Before pursuing new funding, communities must safeguard current funding, continue to deliver milestones to maintain credibility and manage risk; technical assistance is available.
- There is momentum to shift financial systems away from profit-based models toward community-controlled public banks and regenerative finance tools, to recapture local funds and advance local projects.
- Success lies in strong cross-sector partnerships, with state agencies, technical assistance providers, and trusted local leaders.

Roundtable Workshop

UC Berkeley Possibility Lab (Possibility Lab) facilitated a roundtable workshop built around the Possibility Lab's work in deliberative democracy. Participants identified top land use, climate, and energy priorities from the morning sessions to determine actionable solutions with peer regional leaders. The workshops are designed to invite meaningful discussion, source policy ideas, and use digital tools to identify consensus recommendations based on participation from those in attendance.

Topics that were elevated as a top priority from the morning discussions were:

- Energy/grid resilience
- Funding gaps
- Equitable, participatory decision-making

- Balancing housing with competing priorities
- Workforce needs for green transition
- Expanding Electrical Vehicle (EV) access

Participants then articulated actionable solutions for the region and the state to further these priorities. Possibility Lab team is reviewing the raw data from participants and will provide a detailed report on the actions identified through the roundtable workshop.

Examples of draft actions developed during the workshop are:

- Grants should allow for flexible budgeting to address the needs that arise during project implementation
- Regional organizations should receive grants to deliver projects
- The state should modernize and streamline a grant portal for all funding opportunities

Sharing Resources

State agencies and regional service providers participated in a Resource Fair during the Convening to share resources with participants, including funding opportunities, incentives and upcoming engagement opportunities.

Next Steps

A detailed report of actions developed at all Convenings will be presented to SGC's Council at the conclusion of the nine regional events. Participants are receiving the following items as an outcome of the Convening:

- Regional Assistance Guide
- Regional Background Report
- Summary of Event
- Virtual Follow-up Session to access a digital technical assistance tool,
- CCEC Landscape Analysis

Appendix

About the Region

LA Regional Overview

Planning Meetings

Across diverse regions of California, participants consistently identified the need for improved collaboration, capacity building, and equitable funding mechanisms to address climate resilience and community needs. Priority topics included affordable housing, public health in land use, coastal adaptation, rural energy, and workforce development. Key concerns highlighted were permitting hurdles, barriers to renewable energy adoption, and the challenges of aligning state mandates with local realities. Participants emphasized the importance of supporting vulnerable populations, including tribal communities, underserved rural areas, and immigrant groups, while ensuring meaningful engagement, transparent processes, and resources to empower local governments and community-based organizations (CBOs). Other common threads included addressing the impacts of climate change on agriculture, water systems, and wildfire resilience, alongside advancing sustainable infrastructure and urban greening initiatives.

Planning recommendations reflected a shared vision of fostering authentic engagement and actionable outcomes. Suggestions included leveraging existing convenings, providing stipends to support participation, incorporating local success stories, and creating iterative feedback mechanisms to ensure diverse voices are heard. The value of site visits, virtual tools, and tailored communication strategies was frequently noted, as was the need for training and technical assistance to build local expertise. Participants underscored the importance of reducing silos, fostering partnerships, and creating consistent and geographically equitable funding streams to enable long-term, sustainable solutions. These insights provide a clear roadmap for future collaboration, centered on inclusivity, shared governance, and the integration of local knowledge and priorities into broader state and regional goals.

Key Themes (beyond region-specific climate impacts)

- Funding flexibility
 - Reduce barriers for applicants
 - Develop funding programs informed by local practitioners
 - Equitable and consistent funding (geographic/formula distribution)
- Addressing State mandates/policies that don't speak to local realities
- Aligning development and affordable housing goals with climate policy priorities
- Workforce development
- Capacity building for local governments and NGOs
 - Primarily for funding and technical expertise
 - For new climate leaders
- Need for ongoing collaborative structures that feature equitable decision-making

Priorities for Discussion

- Affordable Housing
- Anti-Displacement Plans
- Active Transportation
- Goods Movement and Warehouses (EJ Intersection)
- Workforce Development Pathways & Innovation
- Local Capacity Building
- Combatting "Transactional Outreach"
- Nature based solutions and urban greening
- Funding/Grants

- Partnerships

Planning Recommendations

- Make engagement less transactional
- Complementary/consistent virtual space preferred to in person
- Stipends
- Riverside Venue Recs: CARB Facility, Cheech Museum, Mission Inn
- Acknowledge distinctive communities/subsectors of the county
- Make value-action-community impact connection visuals
- Site visits
- Varied speakers (e.g. poet/artist)
- Money upfront to participate