

CONVENING SUMMARY: SAN DIEGO

Catalyst Convening Summary: San Diego Region

Last updated: April 25, 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 San Diego region, the following elements were used to inform the structure of the San Diego-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.

San Diego-Region Convening Details

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Viejas Casino and Resort

Intended Audience & Registration Analysis

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

Organization Type	Count
State government	35
Local government	23
Nonprofit	23
Academia	20
Consulting	16
Community-based organization	10
Tribal government	6
Utility or Community Choice Aggregators (CCA)	3
Tribal serving organization	3
Economic/ Community Development Organization	3
Regional government	3
Philanthropy	3
Other: Developer, TA provider, Union	4

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	Tom Corringham California Fifth Climate Change Assessment Co-Coordinating Lead Author
Panel: Characterizing the Region	Adrienne Moretz, California Strategic Growth Council Special Advisor, Innovation & Partnerships Nicole Capretz, Climate Action Campaign, Founder, SGC Councilmember Shasta Gaughen, Pala Band of Mission Indians, Environmental Department Director and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Tyler Farmer, County of San Diego, Chief of Departmental Operations for the Sustainability Planning Division
Workshop: The Region's Priorities, Challenges, and Assets	Angie Hacker, Statewide Best Practices Coordinator, Civic Well; CEO & Principal Consultant, Prosper Sustainably
Breakout Room Discussion: Community-Led Adaptation and the Importance of Partnerships	Rico Miranda, Governor's Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation, Tribal Liaison Bryce Lewis-Smith, Governor's Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation Tribal Research Engagement, 5th Climate Assessment Program Amber Pairis, Climate Science Alliance, Executive Director & Founder Ana Gloria Rodriguez, Tipey Joa Native Warriors Johnny Bear Contreras, Kumeyaay- San Pasqual Tribe, Indigenous Art Advisor Thad Winkle, Groundwork San Diego – Chollas Creek, Deputy Director Keith Pezzoli, UCSD, PhD, Director of Bioregional Center for Sustainability Science, Planning and Design
Breakout Room Discussion: Capacity Building	Markie Price, Strategic Growth Council, Policy Associate Angie Hacker, Civic Well, Statewide Best Practices Coordinator Hoi-Fei Mok (Fei), Strategic Growth Council, Deputy Director, Equity & Government Transformation Loren Halil, San Diego State University, Program Coordinator

<p>Breakout Room Discussion: Energy Resilience and Affordability</p>	<p>Allie Larman, Governor’s Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation Assistant Planner, Extreme Heat & Community Resilience Program</p> <p>Ashley Rodriguez, SD Community Power, Local Government Affairs Manager</p> <p>John Flores, San Pasqual Domestic Water Authority, San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, Director, Environmental Department & Water Manager</p> <p>Anna Jane Jones, California Strategic Growth Council, Program Manager, Community Resilience Centers</p>
<p>Executive Welcome</p>	<p>Erin Curtis, CA Strategic Growth Council Executive Director</p>
<p>Roundtable Workshop</p>	<p>UC Berkeley's Possibility Lab</p>
<p>Panel: Funding the Future</p>	<p>Angie Hacker, Prosper Sustainably, CEO & Principal Consultant</p> <p>Amar Azucena Cid, California Strategic Growth Council, Deputy Director for Community Investment and Planning</p> <p>Georgette Gomez, Casa Familiar, Community Development Officer, Former Councilperson</p> <p>Yamilett Carrillo, San Diego Foundation: Assistant Director, Binational Resilience Initiative</p>
<p>Resource Fair</p>	

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.

	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

- San Diego is a binational area and has multiple distinct bioregions, so solutions must be tailored to the specific conditions in each region: i.e. beach, mountain, urban. San Diego can be a great example for the state of how to achieve climate goals and have broad benefits for the community.
- Focusing on climate and resilience, pay attention to what indigenous stewards of the land have known for at least 12,000 years (time immemorial), because these are the people who have always been the stewards of this land and continent. Keep in mind where longevity comes from, and the mistakes that have been made by people who don't know this land as well.
- Climate is not a separate bucket from housing, water, energy, and food. It's all connected. Many governments are not seeing climate as intersectional and instrumental to all the issues we care about it, but these investments must be protected in budgets. For example, the energy transition requires basic infrastructure investments, ensuring access for tribes.

Energy Resilience and Affordability Breakout Room Discussion

- Prioritize partnerships with tribes to develop the energy sources and work with tribes' sovereign status to develop tribal owned utilities.
- Make state grant application process easier and ensure that applications and program guidelines consider and prioritize tribal sovereignty.
- There is a need to bridge the gap in funding and programs given the limiting and uncertainty around federal funding.

Capacity Building Breakout Room Discussion

- The state should tap into and invest in what is already happening in the region. There are already folks providing technical assistance, so there is no need to reinvent the wheel.
- Organizations want non-competitive block grants where they themselves can decide where the money is distributed within their region.
- There is an interest in developing a directory of groups who can provide technical assistance and other programs and are ready to connect with the CBOs who know local communities and can ensure that the appropriate agencies/organizations are applying to funding opportunities.

Community-Led Adaptation and the Importance of Partnerships Breakout Room Discussion

- There is interest in better alignment of initiatives and grant opportunities with tribal economic development boards and tribal corporations/non-profits. Tribes have master plans which guide their decisions and actions, so if state grant opportunities have requirements that don't align closely or pull in too many directions, tribes will not participate.
- Access to ancestral land, especially for connections with native plants, is a core priority for many tribes. Tribes need access to land that is ecologically preserved as well as land that can be irrigated and tended to, and there is interest in state support for that infrastructure, including land use planning and watershed management.

Funding Panel Discussion

- Communities need coordinated funding strategies at the state level in the wake of federal funding uncertainty.
- Regional leadership and cross-sector partnerships, as well as place-based philanthropy, are driving success on climate projects.
- There's a strong call to combine public and private funding, lift up grassroots voices, and embed flexibility into program design and legislation.

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 / electricity affordability
- Enhancing community voice in decision-making
- Streamlining / reducing regulation
- Stronger regional governance for decision-making and reducing silos
- Funding gaps for projects

- Data and evidence

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 some of the actions developed during the workshop are:

- Streamline and simplify the grant application process to support collaborative opportunities.
- Incorporate tribal leadership into climate priority decision-making and governance.
- Show accountability by following through on their desire to better understand the San Diego region.

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 and other resources

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