Wildfire Webinar Series with San Joaquin Valley

(22RD018)

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March 27, 2024

Likelihood of wildfire risk has increased 25% in California & Poor Air Quality

Affecting communities especially in San Joaquin Valley (SJV)

Particularly marginalized, vulnerable are low-income communities, farmworker communities, monolingual Spanish speakers

Fewer resources to combat wildfire & smoke in these communities

Struggle to access resources in Spanish

Brown, P. T., Hanley, H., Mahesh, A., Reed, C., Strenfel, S. J., Davis, S. J., Kochanski, A. K., Clements, C. B. (2023). Climate warming increases extreme daily wildfire growth risk in California. Nature.

Modaresi Rad, A., Abatzoglou, J. T., Kreitler, J. R., Alizadeh, M. R., Aghakouchak, A., Hudyma, N., . . . Sadegh, M. (2023). Human and infrastructure exposure to large wildfires in the United States. Nature Sustainability, 6, 1343-1351.

Almond orchards

Environmental Justice & Co-Liberate Framework Guided Planning of Wildfire Webinar Series

Privileges enlisting the voices and concerns of marginalized communities including farm workers

Emphasizes investigating and documenting context and community level vulnerabilities compounding risks in addition to individual level risk for wildfire

Emphasizes health of communities as a priority

Links environmental justice considerations with public health, climate action, and disaster planning

Saxon, L. Shell, A., Chaterji, T., Zimbardo, Z. (2022). Coliberate: Community driven climate resiliency planning

Wildfire Community Vulnerability Framework also guided wildfire webinar planning

- ❖ **Monolingual Spanish speakers**
- ❖ **Socioeconomic status: Low-income communities**
- ❖ **Housing - Mobile Homes**
- ❖ **Multi-generational households**
- ❖ **Demographics: Households with family members with disabilities, family who are >65, rural, mixed status families**

Fig 1. This wildfire vulnerability framework reflects both the potential of wildfire and the adaptive capacity of a census tract. Outer wedges represent the respective components of wildfire hazard potential and census tract adaptive capacity, though the size of the wedges does not correspond to any weighting scheme.

Davies, I. P., Haugo, R. D., Robertson, J. C., & Levin, P. S. (2018). The unequal vulnerability of communities of color to wildfire. PLOS ONE, 13(11), e0205825.

Webinar Series Planning

- **Making webinars accessible to the community**
  - **Hosting webinars at suitable times e.g., early evenings, virtual, 75-90 minutes in length, Spanish/English live stream translation**
- **What would interest community residents to attend**
- **Financial compensation for time, modest stipend**
- **Topics relevant to community members**
- **Strategically planning webinars to be held immediately after well attended monthly community steering committee meetings**
- **First webinar structured as a listening session**
- **Employing popular education methods, personal lived experiences**

Recruitment Efforts

- **Door-to-door canvassing**

- **Advertising on CNC EF's social media channels (Instagram)**

- **Scheduling webinar immediately following monthly community steering committee meetings**

- **Advertising at other existing CNC EF in-person or virtual community events**

- **Building off other community interests & activities: COVID-19 vaccination, voter registration, ITIN assistance, air filter workshops, tree planting, affordable housing assistance.**

- **#homes canvassed = 1611**

AIR QUALITY/WILDFIRE RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Webinar 1

On May 25th at 5 to 6:15pm we hosted the first webinar. We focused on listening to participants' concerns where they spoke about issues like *affordable housing, water quality, air quality* and *how to respond to natural disasters*.

~30 participants

Webinar 2

On September 27th from 6 to 7:30 pm. We spoke about climate change and resilience to wildfires. The guest speaker was Jose Pablo Ortiz, Senior Scientist in Climate and Water – Union of Concerned Scientists
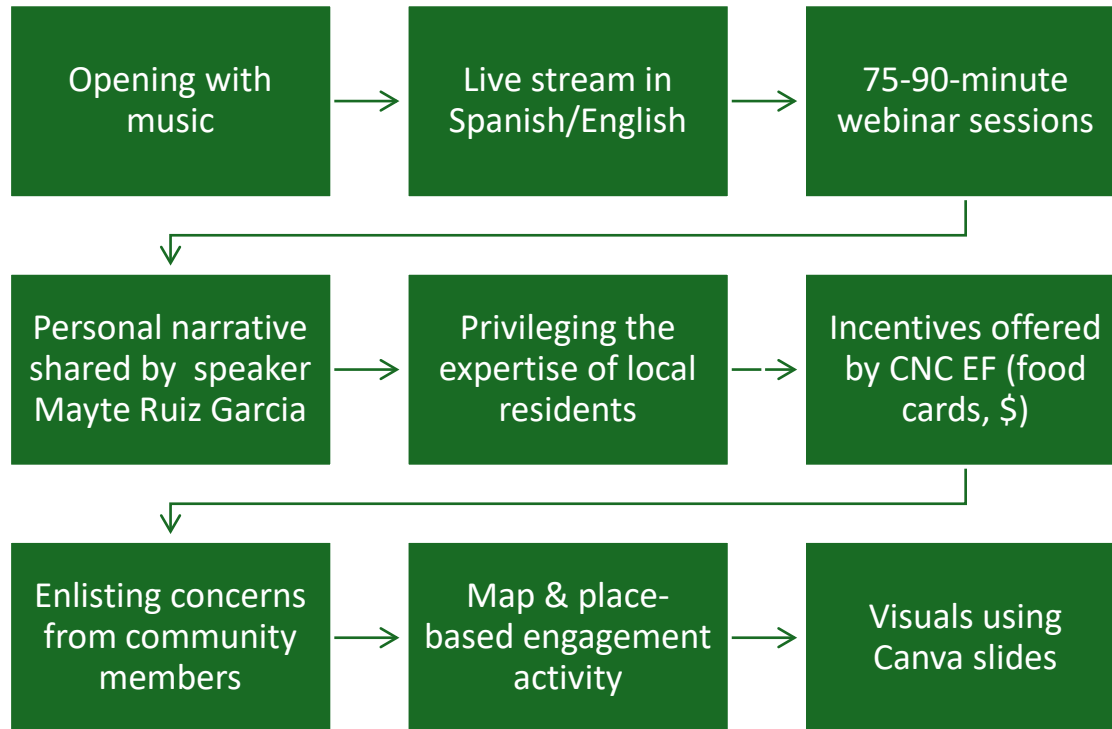
48 participants

Webinar 3

On October 26th from 6 to 7:30 pm. We spoke about climate change and the quality of air. The guest speaker was Angel Fernandez, Senior Scientist of Climate Change – Union of Concerned Scientists

40 participants

Webinars structured to implement popular education methods for engagement

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│  Opening with    │ ───→ │  Live stream in  │ ───→ │  75-90-minute    │
│     music        │      │  Spanish/English │      │ webinar sessions │
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        ↓
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│ Personal narrative│ ───→ │  Privileging the │ --→ │ Incentives offered│
│ shared by speaker │      │  expertise of local│    │ by CNC EF (food  │
│ Mayte Ruiz Garcia │      │    residents      │    │   cards, $)      │
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┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│ Enlisting concerns│ ───→ │   Map & place-   │ ───→ │  Visuals using   │
│ from community   │      │ based engagement │      │   Canva slides   │
│    members       │      │    activity      │      │                  │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
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Webinar #1
Participant
Locations
Merced &
Stanislaus
Counties

~30 participants from Merced County,
mostly women/mothers, monolingual
Spanish speakers
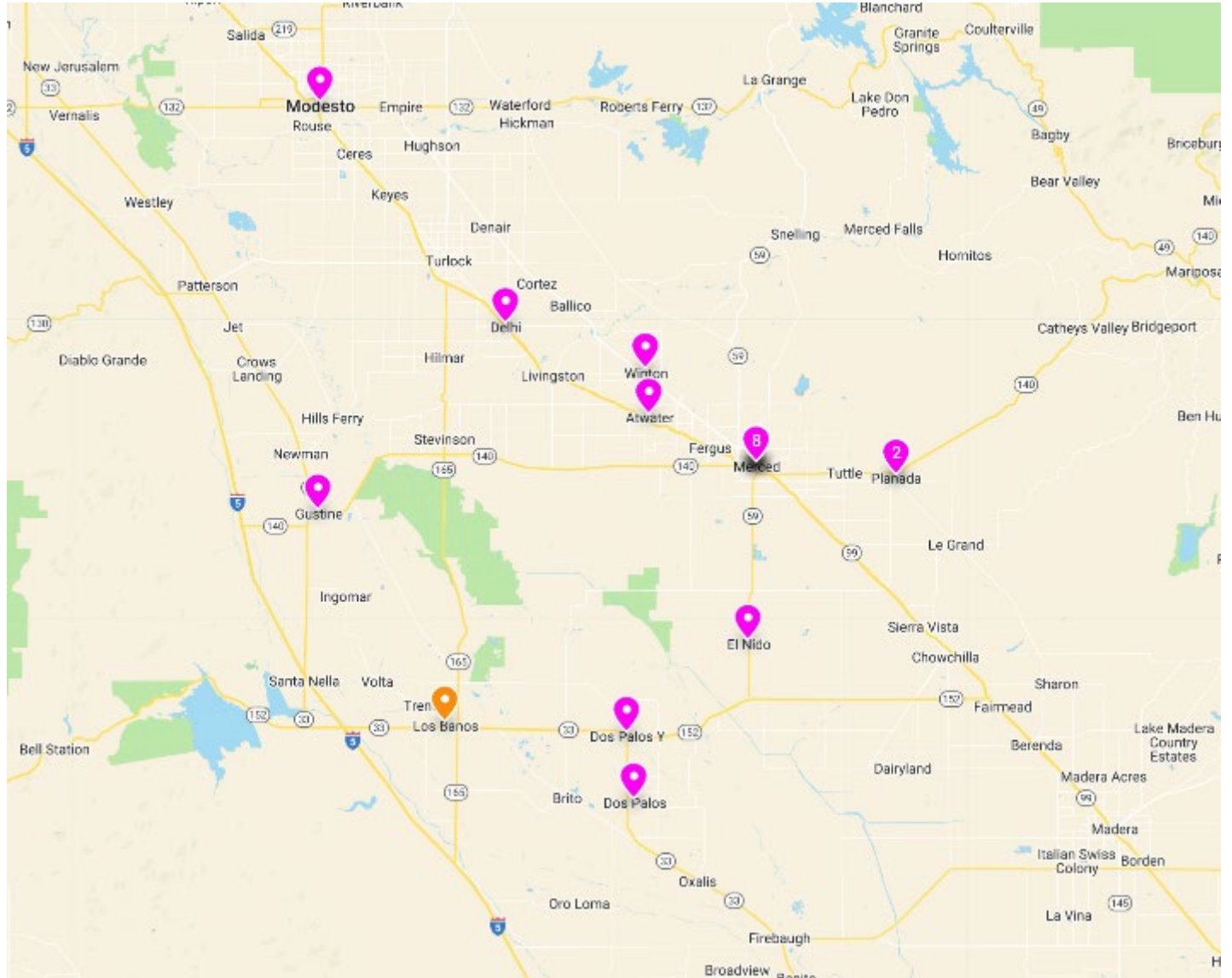
W1: Listening Session
Enlisting Community Experiences & Concerns with Questions

Q1: What are your community's top 3 concerns?

Q2: What issue do you care about most and would move you to action?

Q3: If you could prioritize one of your community concerns, which would it be?

Q4: Fall 2023 webinar planning about wildfire & smoke impacting community, which topics do you prefer?

WEBINAR #1
MAY 25, 2023

Listening sessions to enlist community concerns and personal impact stories. Participants mapped their location and community concerns they are experiencing in their location.

Q1: What are your community's 3 main concerns?

Respondents demonstrated that **water quality, air quality, low-cost accessible housing, and emergency planning (especially for wildfires)** were the leading concerns.

Q2: What issues do you care most about and would move you to action?

Shelter/refuge, Inundations Reforestation, Pesticide use, Environmental pollution/contamination
3.1% each

Road quality **6.3%**

Accessible and affordable housing **9.4%**

Water quality **37.5%**
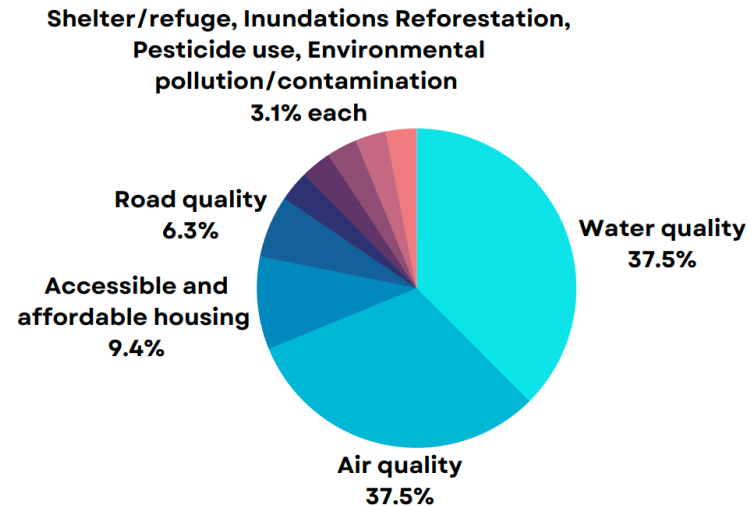
Air quality **37.5%**

Q3: If you could prioritize one of your community concerns, which would be your priority?

Concerns in order of greatest to lowest priority:

1. **Water Quality**
2. **Affordable/Accessible Housing**
3. **Air Quality**
4. **Fire Response**
5. **Post-Disaster**

Q4: For fall 2023 webinar planning (September & October) about wildfire and smoke impacting the community. Which topics do you prefer to have covered?

Of the nine topics, respondents preferred **health impacts** and **sheltering measures in the event of a fire** as topics to be covered for the upcoming webinars, followed by **how to prepare and minimize wildfire and smoke impacts** and **what to do in the event of intense and lingering smoke.**

SJV & ECV Community Concerns related to Wildfire

- More information about health effects of wildfires

- Guidance on finding shelters during evacuations including for undocumented individuals

- Preparing for wildfire in the event of severe smoke

- Who to contact during a wildfire

- Essentials of emergency preparedness including how families with members who have disabilities can prepare

- Availability of post-fire resources including financial, energy & mental health support

- Knowledge about evacuation routes including alternatives to ensure readiness

- Education & awareness about factors that can contribute to wildfire

- Local smoke alerts

Community Level Vulnerabilities that Compound Risk and Response to Wildfires in SJV

- **Sub-standard living conditions housing (extreme rent burden)**

- **Need for information in languages other than English e.g., Spanish, Punjabi**

- **Poverty**

- **Unincorporated communities**

- **Other extreme weather events (flooding, water contamination, extreme heat, drought, wind/dust storms)**

- **Dry overgrowth after heavy rain**

- **Illegal trash dumping**

- **Unhoused community**

- **Environmental hazards and air pollution from other factors e.g., agricultural practices**

- **Poor infrastructure and built environment (e.g., paved roads) impacting evacuation routes**

Additional High Priority Community Concerns

Attainable affordable housing	Water quality and contamination	Recovery from flooding
Air quality concerns – other contributing factors	Infrastructure and paved roads (for evacuation)	Unhoused community
Trash services	Extreme heat	
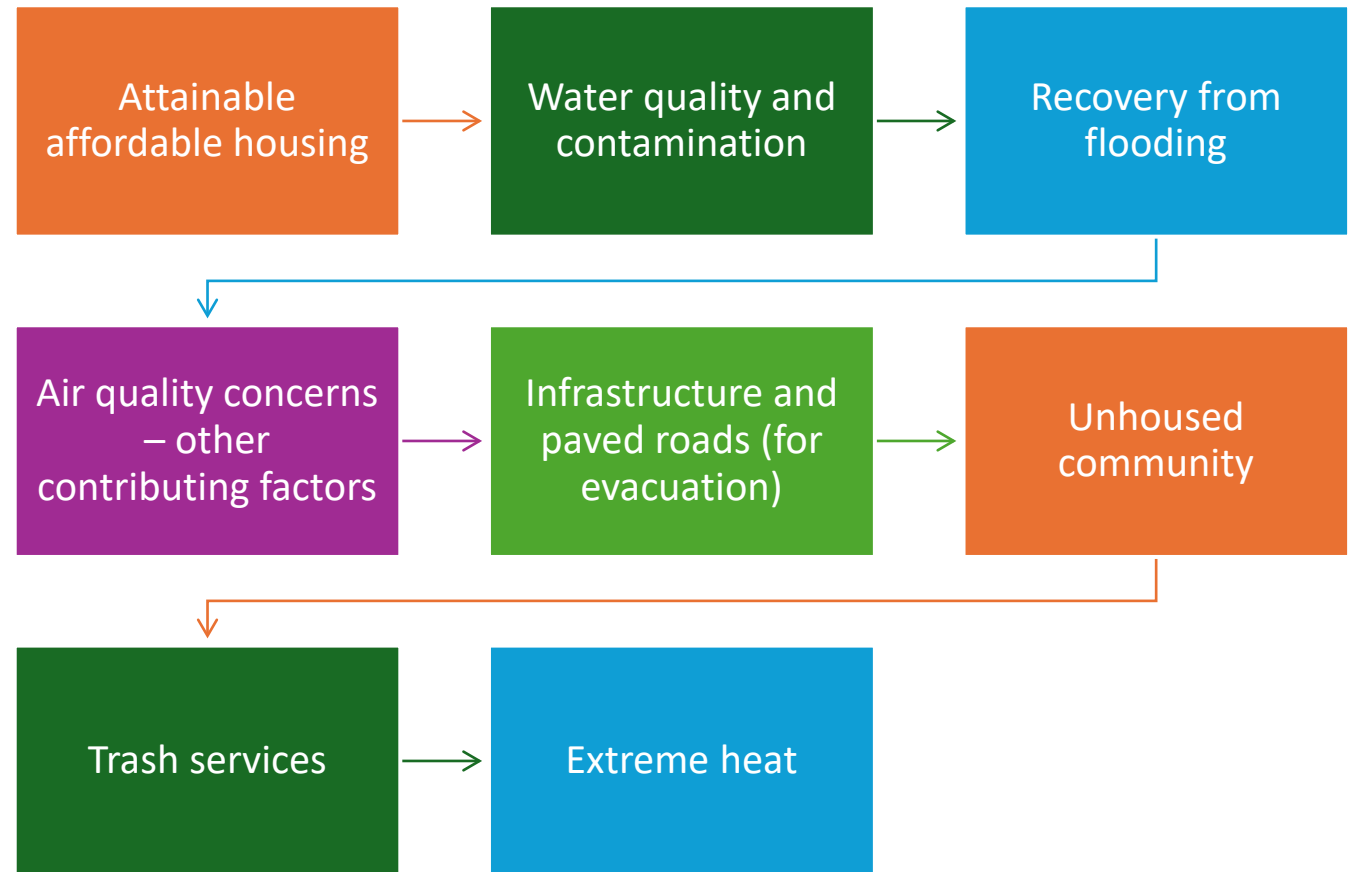
Webinars 2&3 with Climate Scientists from Union for Concerned Scientists

Presentations focused on climate change impacts in the SJV and on increasing frequency and threat from wildfire, poor air and water quality impacts

Having community leaders who live in the area, presented in the audience language (Spanish), and are also experiencing wildfire and climate impacts

Angel S. Fernandez-Bou

J. Pablo Ortiz-Partida

4 BEST PRACTICES for ENHANCING WILDFIRE COMMUNICATION

- **Importance of acknowledging and integrating into messaging the cumulative impacts of structural level determinants of wildfire risk (e.g., other extreme weather co-occurrences like extreme heat & wind, level of local govt interaction with community, waste management & code enforcement services, affordable housing, unhoused community)**

- **Addressing messaging from a Behavior Adaptation Model (BAM). Families may not be able to remove themselves from risk environments, need to adapt to those environments**

- **Community capacity building efforts, solutions must be driven from within communities (intersectional)**

- **Bi-lingual and Map based communication tool may facilitate community involvement in documenting cumulative factors and understanding best messaging**

Solutions-Oriented Discussions

Long term Solutions & Strategies

Supporting policies in California focused on improving health of Californians, policy around cleaner energy sources, sustainable agriculture

Implementing educational curriculum for K-12 but also for adults around wildfires and climate change

Understanding what contributes to poor air quality and health impacts with goal of lowering emissions from harmful sources
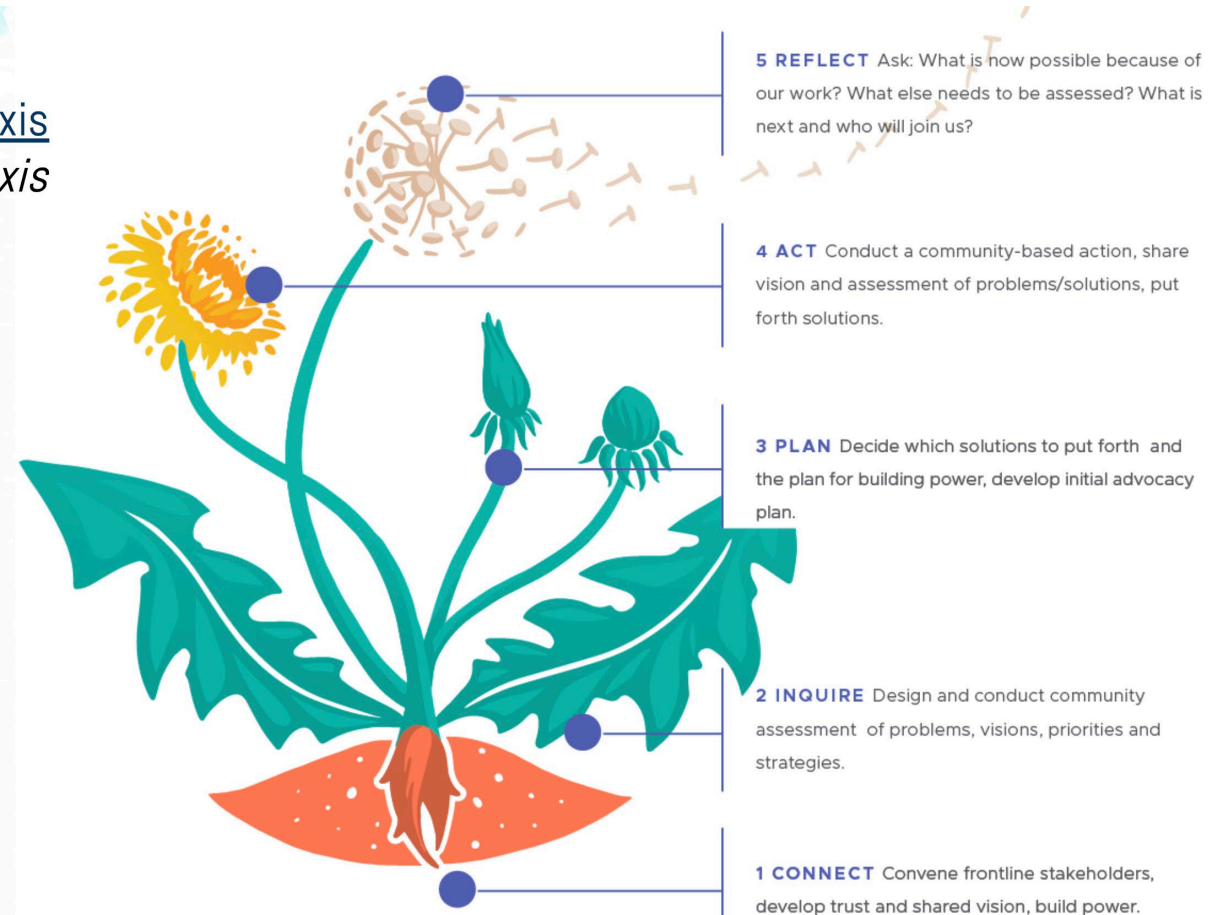
Community Capacity Building in Merced and in ECV

Merced and ECV conducting 10-week community capacity building workshops

- Community residents participate 2x week Feb-June 2024

- Community driven priorities, experiences

- Collaboratively decide priority community concern

- Collect data

- Analyze

- Convene with stakeholders

Flower of Praxis
Flor de la Praxis

5 REFLECT Ask: What is now possible because of our work? What else needs to be assessed? What is next and who will join us?

4 ACT Conduct a community-based action, share vision and assessment of problems/solutions, put forth solutions.

3 PLAN Decide which solutions to put forth and the plan for building power, develop initial advocacy plan.

2 INQUIRE Design and conduct community assessment of problems, visions, priorities and strategies.

1 CONNECT Convene frontline stakeholders, develop trust and shared vision, build power.

QUESTIONS?