

Santa Clara County Climate CBO Ecosystem Mapping Process

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ABSTRACT

Background: To address coming climate change impacts changes equitably, partnerships between Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and governmental agencies in coordinating climate planning are essential. Ecosystem mapping is often a useful first step toward this goal. The ecosystem mapping in Santa Clara County (SCC) aimed to 1) identify climate CBOs engaged in climate work, 2) to assess strengths and assets within SCC's community-driven sectors, and 3) to better understand the state of the relationship between CBOs and the government in terms of its historical and current injustices.

Methods: This Ecosystem Mapping project consisted of two components: first, an internet-based search to identify and learn about climate-related CBOs, and second, informal, semi-structured interviews with volunteer CBOs. Interview questions were designed with the input of Coastal Quest and Climate Resilient Communities. 15 organizations were interviewed for one hour on topics including organization background, goals, challenges, partnerships, and relationship with the county.

Results: A visual Ecosystem Map Visualization was created which enables filtering CBO by topic of focus and existing partnerships. Interviews underscored common challenges including understaffing, time constraints, resource constraints, and difficulties related to working within differential power dynamics. CBO expectations for SCC included the county taking a leadership role and demonstrating longitudinal commitment in the planning process. The most frequently requested county-provided resources were grant services and partnership matching.

Conclusions: Through this process, we identified several core partners and potential leader organizations across the county with the expertise, interest, and capacity to partner with the SCC Office of Sustainability in the planning and implementation of community-based climate solutions.

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