

Beyond Almonds and Blond Lawns

Investing in Non-Profit Organizations
To Sustain Central Valley Communities
Beyond the Drought

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FRESNO
REGIONAL
FOUNDATION

Your Vision – The Valley's Future



REPORT PREPARED BY





Fresno Regional Foundation

For nearly 50 years, the Fresno Regional Foundation has served as the region's community foundation, covering six counties in the central San Joaquin Valley. Its mission is to promote effective philanthropy, strengthen donor legacies, build capacity of local nonprofit organizations and deepen communities across the region. In 2015 the foundation opened its new Center for Community, starting a new chapter in its history. The foundation is the lead organization for this study. For more information, please visit www.fresnoregfoundation.org.

Kern Community Foundation

The Kern Community Foundation is a vibrant nonprofit enterprise with a powerfully simple mission of growing community and philanthropy. Kern Community Foundation is known as a home for local philanthropists, a results-oriented grant maker and a trusted community leader working to improve the quality of life for all who live in Kern County. The Kern Community Foundation collaborated with Fresno Regional Foundation on this project and hosted one of the CBO convenings detailed in this report. For more information, please visit www.kernfoundation.org.



The California Endowment

The California Endowment's mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. The Endowment challenges the conventional wisdom that medical settings and individual choices are solely responsible for people's health. The Endowment believes that health happens in neighborhoods, schools, and with prevention. The Endowment provided funding for this project. For more information, please visit www.calendow.org.



Schonfield Consulting

Since 2004, Schonfield Consulting has worked with a wide range of philanthropic and non-profit clients on strategy development, evaluation, grant-making support, and applied research. Our clients include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Starbucks Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation and others. Anne Schonfield (Principal Consultant) and David Lorey (Associate Consultant) were the lead authors for this report. Please visit us at www.schonfieldconsulting.com.



COVER PHOTO: Yolanda Serrate draws water from a tank provided to her after the well failed at her East Porterville home.

PHOTO: Chieko Hara, The Porterville Recorder

We wish to thank The Fresno Bee, The Porterville Recorder and Neil Chowdhury for generously providing photographs to illustrate this report.

Executive Summary

California and the San Joaquin Valley¹ are in the midst of the worst drought in state history. Due to record low rainfall and snowpack, in January 2015 Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought State of Emergency and introduced drastic water cuts, including a 25% reduction of water use by all cities. The drought has caused significant disruption and distress in urban and rural water use, agricultural livelihoods, the larger economy, and day-to-day activities of residents across the state.

The San Joaquin Valley is particularly hard-hit, with rural and low-income communities especially hurt by the drought, in the context of long-term changes in the agricultural economy, historically low economic development, poor infrastructure, and a frayed social-safety net.²

In spring 2015, the Fresno Regional Foundation began examining the impacts of the drought on San Joaquin Valley non-profit organizations that have been at the forefront of helping struggling individuals, families, and communities. This project focuses on community-benefit organizations (CBOs) to highlight the often hidden community-level impacts of the drought, since non-profits have not been the focus of previous studies, and because these organizations provide the critical link between philanthropic strategy and lasting social impact.

The project gathered information and feedback from nonprofits through an on-line survey of San Joaquin Valley organizations, a series of stakeholder interviews, and four workshops with CBO leaders in Fresno, Merced, Visalia, and Bakersfield. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations for how foundations

and other investors can best assist CBOs to improve their impact and better serve vulnerable populations in the Valley.

Key Recommendations

1. **Invest in the San Joaquin Valley's Future,** including long-term investments in economic opportunity, household water access, and health equity. The Valley is critical to the economy of California and thus to the U.S. economy as a whole.
2. **Focus on strategic investments in poor rural communities for long-term sustainability.** These communities need real fixes to long-standing problems, not “band-aids.”
3. **Make grants to organizations for both specific drought-related programs (including water access, economic opportunity and family health) and general support.** CBOs need flexible funds to deliver programs, cover administrative costs, and hire more staff.
4. **Support organizational capacity and effectiveness,** including training and professional development for staff, boards, and volunteers.
5. **Educate and inform.** Communicate the story of the Valley's challenges and successes in confronting the drought to the media, policymakers, and other funders. Take the Valley story outside the Valley.
6. **Explore new approaches.** “Think outside the box” and take risks. Above all, avoid the temptation to return to “business as usual” when it rains again.

1 The Central Valley of California is made up of the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Valley. While most impacts of the drought are felt throughout the Central Valley, this report focuses on the San Joaquin Valley.

2 See data on poverty and the social safety net in the Central Valley at the Public Policy Institute of California: http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1114

Background

In 2015, the state of California and its San Joaquin Valley—the focus of this report—is in midst of the worst drought in state history.³ For four consecutive years, rainfall and the Sierra snowpack have fallen far below historical levels, at just 5% of long-term average in 2015. Reduced rainfall and runoff from snowmelt have left reservoirs at extremely low levels, with most reservoirs at less than half their historical levels as of July 2015.⁴ Increased pumping of groundwater by agricultural users, towns, and households has also dramatically lowered the water table throughout the region.⁵ And, because the drought has left the state's hills and forests bone dry, the threat of major fires has greatly increased throughout the state, with wildfires creating havoc this summer across California.⁶

These and other impacts of the drought have caused significant negative effects on the agriculture, economy and social fabric of the San Joaquin Valley. In January 2015, Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought State of Emergency, which prompted major readjustments in the state's agricultural sector. In 2015, farmers received no allotments from the federal Central Valley Water Project

Beginning in 2014, Governor Brown introduced two rounds of drastic water cuts, with a mandatory 25% reduction of water use by all cities in 2015.

and only 20% of their usual allotments from state projects. Since agriculture is a significant part of the Central Valley's economy, this has also led to sharply reduced tax receipts for

local governments, hampering their ability to provide services.⁷ Stress to cities and agriculture has also led to significant changes in state water policy. Beginning in

2014, Governor Brown introduced two rounds of drastic water cuts, with a mandatory 25% reduction of water use by all cities in 2015 (from 2013 levels), and a special water bill signed by Brown in March 2015 providing more than \$1 billion of drought relief.⁸

Agricultural Water Use, Conservation, Changing Economy

The drought continues to capture headlines. In July 2015, the U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation that diverts more water from California's Bay Delta to farms (President Obama threatened to veto the bill) and Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced drought relief legislation in the U.S. Senate to channel \$1.3 billion over 10 years to water storage, desalination, environmental protection, and emergency assistance.

Media coverage, scholarly studies and policy papers have focused attention on a wide range of issues related to the drought, from shortcomings in California's hydrologic infrastructure and stresses in the agricultural sector (including high water use by almond orchards and other water-intensive crops), to conservation efforts in large cities—in general, focusing on farmers' water use, water shortages, and other immediate concerns in the state.⁹ Local and statewide news coverage in the San Joaquin Valley has provided moving testimony on the challenges of poor rural communities, where both wells and traditional sources of agricultural employment have run dry.¹⁰ Findings of policy and scholarly studies on the economic impacts of the drought have been mixed, particularly about whether the drought has led to net job loss in

3 Griffin, D., & Anchukaitis, K. J. (2014). "How Unusual Is The 2012–2014 California Drought?" *Geophysical Research Letters*, 41:24, 9017–9023, doi: 10.1002/2014GL062433.

4 <http://www.californiadrought.org/drought/current-conditions/>, accessed on July 29, 2015.

5 <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/californias-groundwater-loss-mean-entire-u-s/>; http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/science/beneath-california-crops-groundwater-crisis-grows.html?_r=0.

6 *Sacramento Bee*, "Wildfire In Lake County Prompts Mandatory Evacuation," August 9, 2015.

7 Zelezny, Lynnette et al., "Impact of the Drought in the San Joaquin Valley of California," *California State University Fresno*, July 2015. p. 117.

8 Meeks, A. (2015, March 25). "Bill Would Let \$1 Billion In Drought Relief Flow In Bone-Dry California." CNN. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com>.

9 Ibid.

10 See six 2015 articles in the *Los Angeles Times* by Diana Marcum, for which she won a Pulitzer Prize, beginning with <http://www.latimes.com/local/great-reads/la-me-cl-drought-toledo-20150414-story.html#page=1>.

agriculture,¹¹ notwithstanding the obvious impacts on individual farmworkers and their families.

But extensive media coverage and other studies make it clear that the drought has had a significant impact on urban and rural water use, agricultural livelihoods, the larger economy and the other day-to-day activities of residents across the state. This is particularly apparent in the Central Valley, where agriculture produces 25% of the nation's food, including 40% of fruit, nuts, and other table foods.¹² In recent years, Central Valley agriculture has experienced a transformation due to market

Many rural and low-income communities in the San Joaquin Valley have been particularly hard hit by the drought.

forces and technology— from more labor-intensive row crops to high-value and often water-intensive crops (like nut trees)—that is changing traditional pat-

terns of work and livelihood. As detailed below, many rural and low-income communities in the Valley have been particularly hard hit, suffering from the changing agricultural economy, in a context of historically low economic development, poor infrastructure, and a frayed social-safety net.¹³

Fresno Regional Foundation's Drought Project

In light of these complex issues, the Fresno Regional Foundation began an initiative in spring 2015 to examine the impacts of the drought on non-profit organizations in the San Joaquin Valley, focusing on seven counties (Fresno, Madera, Merced, Tulare, Kings, Mariposa and Kern). With the support from The California Endowment and in collaboration with the Kern Community Foundation, this project focuses specifically on how the drought affects community-benefit



PHOTO: Neil Chowdhury, California State University, Fresno

Farmworkers Carlos Ramos and Hector Alfaro walk through fallowed fields.

organizations (CBOs) that are at the forefront of helping individuals, families, and communities affected by the drought.¹⁴ We focus on CBOs to highlight the often hidden community-level impacts of the drought. These organizations are the “boots on the ground” but have not been the focus of previous studies or significant news coverage. Understanding the impact on CBOs is critical to understanding how drought-related problems can be most effectively addressed, since these organizations provide the necessary link between philanthropic strategy and lasting social impact. Understanding the needs of CBOs is also central to ameliorating the social and health impacts of the drought among hard-hit San Joaquin Valley populations.

The goals for this project are:

- **To understand better the impacts of California's drought on CBOs in the San Joaquin Valley**, by listening and gathering insights from organizations, community leaders, and experts throughout the region; and

11 *Fresno Bee*, “Drought Taking A Lower Than-Expected Toll On Valley Jobs, Economy,” June 1, 2015. See also Richard Howitt, et al. “Economic Analysis of the 2015 Drought for California Agriculture,” UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences, August 17, 2015, pp. 9–10, where net effects on agricultural employment are assessed.

12 *US Geological Survey/California Water Science Center*, “California's Central Valley”: <http://ca.water.usgs.gov/projects/central-valley/about-central-valley.html>

13 *Washington Post*, “California's Rural Poor Hit Hardest As Massive Drought Makes Remaining Water Toxic,” July 5, 2015; People Power Media, “Surviving the Drought in California: Farm Workers Struggle to Put Food on the Table,” June 2015.

14 The terms “community-benefit organization,” “CBO,” and “non-profit organizations” are used interchangeably in this report.

- **To identify ways that foundations, individual donors, and other investors can better support Central Valley CBOs** to meet the needs of vulnerable populations impacted by the drought and other long-standing problems.

To carry out the project, the Fresno Regional Foundation (working with Schonfield Consulting) gathered information and feedback from organizations in three ways. The project began with an on-line survey of

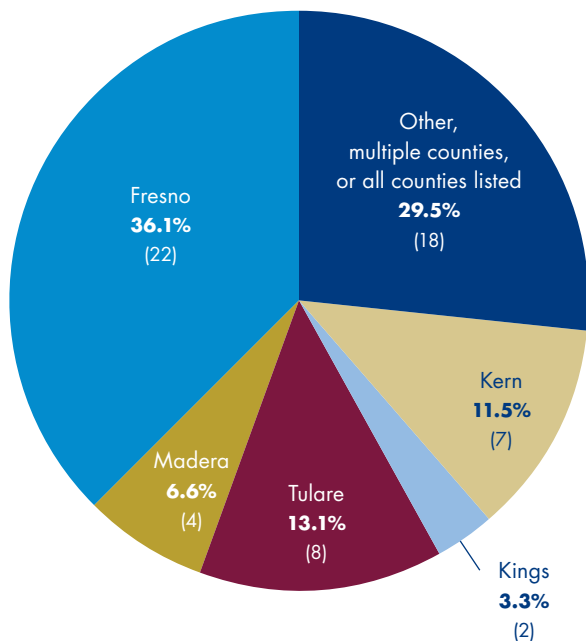
230 San Joaquin Valley organizations in May 2015, then designed and executed a series of interviews in June, and organized four workshops with CBO leaders in Fresno, Merced, Visalia, and Bakersfield in July. We present key findings from each of these sources in the sections below. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations for how foundations and other investors can best assist CBOs to improve their impact and better serve vulnerable populations in the Valley now and in the future.

Survey of Community Organizations

To begin data collection, in May 2015 the Fresno Regional Foundation contacted over 230 community benefit organizations (CBOs) in the San Joaquin Valley to understand the impacts of the drought on their clients, communities, and directly on the organizations themselves. In response, 25% of CBOs completed the 19-question survey, including a wide range of direct service providers, advocacy organizations, and other agencies in all seven targeted counties (see Appendix A).

In what county do your clients typically live?

Question #2 from CBO Survey



Key Survey Findings

Drought Impacts On CBO Clients

- **95% of survey respondents rate the impact of the drought as moderate or severe** on both their clients and on their organizations. CBOs listed unemployment and income loss, access to water, family stress, food insecurity, and direct health effects as among the most significant impacts of the drought.
- Respondents listed **economic insecurity resulting from reduced agricultural employment** as the most significant impact of the drought on clients (72% of respondents), including reduced hours and wages for farm workers and other seasonal workers, and families having to relocate to other areas for work.

- Other respondents cited **reduced water quality and water access** as major concerns for their clients. This includes wells going dry, clients paying higher water costs, and water contamination. As one CBO respondent explained “The dry well situation that is affecting rural communities is probably the biggest issue in this county.”

“The dry well situation that is affecting rural communities is probably the biggest issue in this county.”

—Survey respondent

- CBOs also noted that clients **need more assistance meeting basic needs and are experiencing increased family stress**. Basic needs include rental assistance, affordable housing, support with

utility bills, and access to water. Others noted that the drought brings additional stress on families, especially in the rural areas where head of households are losing employment and households are crowded.

- The **drought's impacts are worst for the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the San Joaquin Valley** (including undocumented workers, seniors, homeless and rural residents in unincorporated communities) since they have few resources to handle additional shocks. Several CBO respondents noted that the drought greatly exacerbates long-standing challenges of already disadvantaged communities, including poverty, underemployment, a frayed social-safety net, mental-health challenges, and other issues.

Drought Impacts On CBOs

The survey indicates that many organizations are struggling to keep up with clients' needs for services. CBOs need additional funding both to increase drought-related programs and to build capacity to meet client needs related to the drought.

- **Only 11% of CBOs said their organizations are well prepared** to meet the drought-related needs of their clients, and most CBOs are "stretched thin" and struggling to keep pace with increased needs. One organization explained it now provides basic needs assistance (for food, housing, utilities) to families impacted by the drought in addition to the services it already provided. Another noted, "We are not able to keep up with the enormity of demand."

Only 11% of CBOs said their organizations are well prepared to meet the drought-related needs of clients.



PHOTO: Silvia Flores-Fresno Bee

Rubber barrels filled with non-potable water sit on the back porch as Juana Garcia prepares for her 15 minute walk to the public showers at a local church with her children Noemi and Christopher Castro.

- **CBOs have developed some innovative ways to stretch resources**, including advice and referral phone lines to eliminate long travel distances for rural residents, alternative times for service provision to reach additional clients (including day laborers), and increased collaboration with other non-profits to expand service reach.
- **CBOs need additional resources and organizational support to meet clients' needs.** These include additional funds to increase service delivery of existing programs, capacity-building to build new programs and/or upgrade staff skills, and increased staff and expertise for both existing and expanded programs. As one organization explained, "The drought is beginning to affect our organization's revenues. We receive a lot of revenue from growers and other agriculture-related local businesses."

Interviews with Experts and Organizational Leaders

Following the survey, the Fresno Regional Foundation's consultants conducted in-depth phone interviews with experts and CBO leaders to gather more detailed information on impacts of the drought on San Joaquin Valley

CBOs. The interviews focused on how the drought is impacting CBOs, how foundations and other funders can help organizations meet clients' drought-related needs, and how non-profits and their supporters can begin to

address the root causes behind the drought's impacts on marginalized communities. Interviews were conducted with a wide range of leaders, including representatives

“While the drought has helped to bring big issues to light, the better long-term approach is to look deeper at these societal issues.”

–Kristen Barnes
Kern Community Foundation

from USDA, Wells Fargo Community Relations, Central California Legal Services, Community Food Bank (Fresno), Office of Community and Economic Development at California State University, Fresno, and others (see Appendix B).

Key Interview Findings

Building on the survey findings, the interviews helped us identify additional impacts of the drought on CBOs, their clients and communities, most notably that the drought exacerbates long-standing and underlying problems in marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Drought Impacts on CBO Clients And Communities

- **Water access and water quality challenge many communities**, particularly in rural, unincorporated areas. As noted in the survey, wells are drying up in several communities and are very expensive to re-drill (\$30,000), with one year or longer in waiting times. Interviewees also expressed concerns about diminishing water quality, water storage, increased water costs, and groundwater contamination. As one example, Cantua Creek in Fresno County has very poor municipal water quality but prices have increased (in some cases, from \$70 to \$1,000 per acre foot).
- **California's drought exacerbates many underlying problems faced by the San Joaquin Valley's most vulnerable populations** including lack of economic opportunity in rural areas, under-employment, low investment in basic infrastructure (such as limited



PHOTO: Chieko Hara, The Porterville Recorder

Portable toilets are provided at Eagles Nest Resort in East Porterville after the well went dry in the fall 2014.

access to municipal water systems), and inadequate social-safety nets. These problems are particularly acute for poor, rural communities, undocumented workers, seniors, and other marginalized populations.

- **Impacts on air quality, basic needs, family stress.** The Central Valley has among the worst air quality in the United States¹⁵ and the drought exacerbates this situation, increasing dust and particulates in the air, and in turn worsening the already high prevalence of asthma and Valley Fever.¹⁶ Interviewees also cited examples of changing employment patterns leading to increased food insecurity, family stress, over-crowded housing, and other impacts on basic needs. Overall, impacted communities are very high-need, without savings or resilience to deal with added stress. As one interviewee noted, “Even when the drought is over, ‘normal’ is a very tough situation for the most impacted communities.”
- **For many individuals, families, and communities, the drought intensifies the ongoing transformation in California's agricultural economy**, with changing employment patterns and other significant impacts

¹⁵ American Lung Association, “State of the Air”, 2015.

¹⁶ See for example Zelezny et al. analysis of rising rates of Valley Fever due to the drought, p. 6. Five of the six counties with the highest annual rates of Valley Fever in California (2009–2012) were in the San Joaquin Valley.

on the Central Valley economy. Interviewees noted that seasonal workers, irrigators, farm workers, and packinghouse workers have fewer hours and reduced wages, and there is evidence of migration by job seekers to other agricultural regions in California. Several interview subjects explained that job retraining is critical, but resources are limited, with many clients lacking the basic literacy and numeracy skills to transition to better employment either within or outside the agricultural sector.

Drought impacts on CBOs

- **Non-profits are stretched thin—but this is “business as usual.”** The experts we interviewed report that CBOs are impacted in different ways by the drought, with some receiving more attention—including more media—but many are increasing their services to clients, often without additional funding. As one interview subject explained “Organizations are stretched to the max,” but this is “business as usual” for many non-profits, who often have insufficient staff to cover clients’ needs.

“We’re not going to recover from this drought the way we think we are. The question is how to manage the change, and how to meet the needs of communities in a changing economy.”

–Craig Martinez
The California Endowment

- **CBOs would like to reorient their approach to tackle long-term needs.** Several interviewees noted that the drought gives organizations an opportunity to change CBO culture and the way they do business in the Valley. This includes working in collaboration with other groups and reorienting programs and services to address long-term and underlying needs of marginalized communities, as opposed providing “band-aids” or short-term fixes. Other interviewees noted that relatively few CBOs work directly with remote rural communities most impacted by the drought, and there is an opportunity to expand services there.
- As local governments struggle with increased needs and falling tax revenue, **some organizations**

are taking on roles of local social service agencies, including drinking water distribution. But few CBOs are equipped for the leadership, management or delivery challenges of these expanded services, which put additional stress on already stretched organizations and staff.

How Foundations and Others Funders Can Help

- **Invest in the Valley’s Future!** A key message from many experts is that San Joaquin Valley funders and other investors—including foundations, individual donors, public-sector, and private-sector investors from across the region, the state and the nation—can be more focused on long-term issues, economic development, and building a robust social-safety net. Funders should address both the short-term impacts of the drought (water access/quality, less employment for seasonal workers) while also focusing on the long-term, underlying problems (shifts in agricultural economy, long-term under-investment).
- **Help change the public narrative on the drought and funders’ approaches.** Several interviewees stressed the need to reorient the current public debate on California’s drought. That is, away from the current media focus on agriculture and water conservation (such as almond growers’ high water use, “blond” lawns, and shorter showers), toward a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and impacts in the San Joaquin Valley, where poor, rural communities are under-resourced and politically weak. The drought provides an opportunity to educate foundation colleagues, individual donors, and other investors, to instill a sense of urgency about the drought and to address long-term problems—to realize that the region is worth

“The drought provides a big opportunity to build capacity across organizations and increase collective impact. Fresno Regional Foundation can move us in that direction.... It could be a game changer.”

–Andrew Souza
Community Food Bank (Fresno)

investing in beyond a charitable response to the current crisis.

- **The Fresno Regional Foundation has a unique role to play.** Several community leaders noted very little collaboration in the Central Valley to address the drought's impacts, with many CBOs not coordinating efforts or talking to one another. Community

foundations like Fresno Regional Foundation and Kern Community Foundation can play an important role as conveners on these issues, bringing organizations and funders together to collaborate, share strategies, and increase impact. The drought provides a good opportunity for these foundations to play a key facilitator role, as well as to engage their donors to identify drought-related solutions.

CBO Convenings

Building on the information gathered from the CBO survey and interviews, the Fresno Regional Foundation held four CBO workshops in the San Joaquin Valley in July 2015 to gather additional input, particularly on how CBOs and the philanthropic community can collaborate in their drought-related work. The convenings were held in Fresno and Merced (both on July 22), Visalia (July 29) and Bakersfield (July 30). Sixty-nine non-profit and community representatives participated from a wide range of organizations, including Radio Bilingüe, Comprehensive Youth Services of Fresno, Easter Seals Central California, Merced County Department of Public Health, California Rural Legal Assistance, Family Services of Tulare, Porterville Area Coordinating Council, and Community Action Partnership of Kern (see Appendix C).

Key Findings from Convenings

Drought Impacts on CBOs, Clients and Communities

- **Organizational reach, capacity and funding.** Organizations reported that their geographical service areas have grown to meet the increased needs of rural communities impacted by the drought, but this is happening when overall funding and in-kind donations are decreasing due to donor and community fatigue. Increased workloads have led to staff burnout and client stress, particularly when employees themselves are impacted by the drought in their own homes and communities.
- **CBOs need more resources, additional staff to cover geographically isolated communities** as well as capacity building/professional development on issues related to drought (water access, unemployment, and physical and emotional health).
- **Complacency and lack of understanding of the true impact of the drought.** CBOs also discussed the lack of public understanding about the true impact of the drought in the San Joaquin Valley, especially on rural residents. To address this, CBOs see a need for more media outreach and public education—including in languages other than English and Spanish—to increase public understanding of the drought's impact on farm workers, rural communities, and vulnerable populations.



PHOTO: Schonfield Consulting

Participants at the Fresno convening.

- **New approaches to collaboration and long-term thinking.** Workshop participants reported a great need for more collaboration among service providers, noting that CBOs, private sector, and government are not coordinating their outreach or services (and many residents are not aware of new or expanded services offered by government or CBOs). Some noted the inability of CBOs to work together, seemingly entrenched in competition. Others said the drought should force CBOs to

Convening participants reported a need for better collaboration among CBOs, the private sector, and government agencies to coordinate outreach and services.

look beyond the immediate needs of rural communities and address the long-term, structural issues, including building local strength and capacity, and helping clients adapt to the larger shifts in the Central Valley's agricultural economy.

How Foundations and Other Funders Can Help

Convening participants offered many suggestions for foundations and other funding partners to help Valley nonprofits better meet clients' drought-related needs, including both financial and non-financial support within organizations and other sector-wide approaches.

SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS, CBO SKILLS

- **More funding for both specific programs and general support.** The most direct way funders can support organizations is through increased financial support, both for specific programs and through unrestricted, general support. For programs, needs include drought/emergency assistance, clients' needs assessment, and pilot projects. There was also significant support for unrestricted and flexible funds to strengthen organizational capacity, cover administrative costs, hire more staff, and help nonprofits respond quickly to community needs. Others mentioned they need technology upgrades to streamline operations and help them operate more efficiently.



PHOTO: Schonfield Consulting

Convening participants shared ideas on solutions.

- **Organizational development.** In addition to direct grants, many organizations expressed significant needs for organizational development, including staff/management training and professional development (in leadership, strategic planning, accounting, finance, fundraising and grant writing, human resources, strategies for working with stressed communities) designed for the specific needs of San Joaquin Valley CBOs. This includes board development and training (such as fundraising and leadership skills) and volunteer training, since volunteers are the backbone of many Valley organizations.
- **Non-financial support.** Many participants noted that foundations can make a big impact with non-financial support as well, including providing meeting space for collaboration and centers in rural areas that could be shared by CBOs. Others stressed the need for training in grant writing, fund development and fundraising (especially for smaller CBOs), including how to apply for more state and federal funding. One example is the planned fall 2015 grant writing workshops funded by the Fresno Regional Foundation (in collaboration with Fresno State University, USDA and California Rural Legal Assistance) to be held in Merced, Fresno, Visalia for CBOs and city staff from small rural communities.

SUPPORT FOR SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY NONPROFIT SECTOR

- **Educate funding colleagues, media outreach.** Beyond support for specific organizations, many workshop participants explained that foundations can greatly assist San Joaquin Valley CBOs by educating foundation and donor colleagues, and helping to convince donors both inside and outside the Valley to support work here. This could include public education or a media campaign on the drought’s human impact and support for policy or advocacy work to draw attention to the San Joaquin Valley and the need for more investments.
- **Promote CBO collaboration, partnerships.** Foundations and other donors can do a great deal to

Help convince donors both inside and outside the Central Valley to support work here.

facilitate more collaboration and networking among organizations, including organizing “how to”

workshops, and helping to convene unlikely alliances of partners (non-profits and for-profit organizations). As one convening participant put it, funders should be a matchmaker and help create partnerships between non-profits and the public, private, and university sectors.

- **Sector-wide leadership, unconventional approaches.** Many workshop attendees urged foundations to seek unconventional solutions to address the drought’s impact on Central Valley communities. This could include using foundation dollars to leverage private-sector investments in the Valley and exercising the convening power of foundations to raise awareness and increase investments in our communities. Participants encouraged funders to support risk, think beyond what’s worked in the past, and help CBOs and other stakeholders to shape the Valley’s common future—especially on potentially contentious issues like water access and water rights.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. The drought’s impact on San Joaquin Valley CBOs is significant and reflects both immediate impacts on CBOs and added impacts on their clients (water access/quality, unemployment) and long-term problems in low-income rural communities that are exacerbated by the drought (stresses from widespread poverty and a frayed social-safety net). In assessing impact, it is important to distinguish between three factors:

- *Direct impacts* of the drought, including problems with access to water, declining water quality, and health impacts from airborne dust from drier soils;
- *Indirect impacts* of the drought, including increased demand for CBO services resulting from changes

in employment, food insecurity, needs for basic services, and mental health; and

- Ways in which the drought has *exacerbated pre-existing social and health stresses* in under-resourced and underserved communities.

An important finding of this study is that, while impacts such as the “blond lawns” and agricultural water use have garnered the lion’s share of media attention, **the indirect and long-term impacts of drought create the most suffering for the Valley’s under-served and disadvantaged populations.**

2. Drought is a long-term problem...even when it rains again. Although it will rain again in California (heavier rain is predicted in the Northern Hemisphere in spring 2016 with El Niño conditions¹⁷), the issues

17 National Weather Service, El Niño Diagnostic Discussion, July 9, 2015: http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.html.

identified above are long-term, and won't go away when it starts raining. Periodic drought is a feature of life in the Central Valley, and long-term water scarcity will characterize California far into the future.¹⁸ In addition, there is likely to be a lag effect; many of this drought's health and social impacts will continue to be felt by communities for years to come.¹⁹ The challenge is to begin addressing these long-term challenges *now*, so the Valley will be better able to handle them in the future.

3. The most pressing areas of CBO client need are:

- **Water access and water quality**, including urgent assistance for communities that depend on wells that are failing as groundwater levels drop;
- **Improved economic opportunity and development**, due to short- and long-term changes in agricultural and food-processing employment;
- **Better family health** including mental-health services.

In all of these areas, the drought exacerbates long-standing economic, public health, and infrastructure problems. As in most natural and man-made disasters, it is low-income, rural and often marginalized communities in the San Joaquin Valley—often with little political representation or clout—who experience the most severe distress, disruption, and dislocation.

4. The most significant impacts on San Joaquin Valley CBOs are:

- **Overwhelming demand by clients for increased services** and inability to meet these expanded needs. In the CBO survey, only 11% of respondents said their organizations are well prepared to meet the drought-related needs of clients.
- **Lack of organizational capacity to develop new programs, train or hire staff in new areas and collaborate with other**



PHOTO: Neil Chowdhury, California State University, Fresno

Fresno's Blossom Trail has seen better days.

organizations, due to organizations already being “stretched thin,” by lack of staff, resources, professional development and other factors.

- **Lack of facilities, assets (such as vehicles), and organizational infrastructure (such as information technology) to expand or deepen work with clients.** Organizations are frequently caught between responding to clients' immediate needs and planning for future programs, and CBO leaders frequently feel unable to address either.

Because local governments and agencies are also struggling in the face of the drought, **strengthening CBOs and helping them to better provide services to vulnerable communities is key to reducing the impact of the drought in the Valley.**

CBOs are the critical link between the philanthropic community (including individual donors) and the needs of local communities—working together, institutional and individual donors and CBOs can help build and sustain healthy communities in the Valley.

CBOs are the critical link between the philanthropic community and the needs of communities.

18 Fears, D. “California’s Terrifying Climate Forecast: It Could Face Droughts Nearly Every Year,” *The Washington Post*, March 2, 2015.

19 Zelezny et al., p. 118.



PHOTO: Silvia Flores, Fresno Bee

Volunteers Ruben Perez and Donna Johnson, of East Porterville, fill barrels with non-potable water to deliver to local residents whose wells have dried up.

Recommendations

How can the philanthropic community (including foundations, individual donors, and other investors) best help San Joaquin Valley CBOs respond to the drought? We share the following recommendations for positive change.

1. Provide financial and other direct support to organizations

There are many ways to help CBOs and other organizations working on the front lines:

- **Invest in the Valley’s future.** The Valley needs many more investors (foundations, individual donors, governments, private investors) putting their resources, time and commitment here. This starts with local partners and needs to include statewide and national funders, since the Central Valley is critical to the economy of California and thus to the U.S. economy as a whole.
- **Make long-term (versus short-term or one-off) investments in economic opportunity, water access, and basic needs** so that the impacts of the current drought are reduced while communities build their resilience to future

emergencies. This could include strategies like job re-training for agricultural workers, and other longer-term remedies for infrastructure and public health.

- **Focus on strategic investments in poor communities for long-term sustainability.** Low-income, rural communities are bearing the brunt of the drought and need real fixes to long-standing problems. This should include as much attention on *indirect* impacts and ways the drought has exacerbated underlying problems as on *direct* impacts.

- **Make grants for both specific programs and general support** so CBOs can address both ongoing program needs and capacity-building objectives. CBOs need flexible funds to strengthen organizational capacity, cover administrative costs, hire more staff and better communicate their impact.

- **Support organizational capacity and effectiveness.** Central Valley organizations have great needs for training and professional development for staff, boards, and volunteers (in leadership, strategic planning, finance, grant writing, fund development and other areas), to increase their skills, capacity, and effectiveness.

The Valley needs many more investors (foundations, individual donors, governments, private investors) putting their resources, time and commitment here.

- **Promote collaboration by reducing the costs to CBOs** of developing effective partnerships between non-profits and with public, private, and university sectors (including hosting, encouraging, and funding collaboration).

2. Outreach and sector-wide leadership

- **Educate and inform, “take the Valley story outside the Valley.”** Communicate the story of the Valley’s challenges and successes in confronting the drought to the public, the media,

policymakers, as well as state and national funders. This could include changing the narrative on the drought away from the current media focus toward a deeper understanding of true impacts in the Central Valley, successful local responses, and the complexities of long-term solutions.

- **Take advantage of the current widespread attention to the drought** in the media and public awareness to draw attention and resources to the Valley's long-term needs, especially for its most vulnerable individuals, families, and communities.
- **Work with regional, state, and national funders and federal and state agencies to channel resources** (including non-financial resources) **to Central Valley CBOs**. Supporters have a critical role to play in helping to convince colleagues both inside and outside the Valley to support work here.
- **Help organizations find greater political access** by convening policymakers and CBO leaders to network, forge strategy, and develop tactical relationships and plans. The rural, low-income San Joaquin Valley communities that are hardest hit by the drought also lack political

clout and greatly need advocacy support.

- **Explore new approaches.** The vast challenges that CBOs and communities face in the Valley require supporters to “think outside the box,” take risks, and use their convening power to help develop and support new solutions to long-standing problems. Above all, avoid the temptation to return to “business as usual” when it rains again.

The San Joaquin Valley is an extraordinarily diverse region, with significant disparities, and one of the fastest growing areas of California.²⁰ Although the Valley faces significant challenges from the drought and other long-standing issues, there is also an enormous opportunity to invest in this region, its people and organizations. There are many ways that CBOs, the philanthropic sector and individual donors can work together to create a better future for the San Joaquin Valley and all who live and work there.

There is an enormous opportunity to invest in this region, to build community, and strengthen CBOs that are in turn strengthening local communities.

As a community foundation, we believe our mission is to work with the local organizations to support the work that only they can do. Many local non-profits are on the front lines of this crisis, dealing with the frailties of life made more challenging by the drought. Our core values are listening to the community, sharing their stories, and engaging our philanthropic partners including individual donors in solutions that strengthen the Central Valley and create a brighter future. We invite you to join us in this good work.

**–Hugh J. Ralston
President and CEO
Fresno Regional Foundation**

²⁰ Zelezny et al., p. viii. From 2000–2010, the San Joaquin Valley's population grew 20%, twice the rate of California's overall population growth in that time period.

Appendix A: Survey Of Community Benefit Organizations

In May 2015, the Fresno Regional Foundation conducted an on-line survey of 230 CBOs in the San Joaquin Valley to understand the impact of the drought on their organizations and clients. The following organizations completed the survey:

1. American Red Cross, Central Valley Chapter
2. American Red Cross, Kern Chapter
3. Assistance League of Bakersfield
4. Bakersfield ARC
5. Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County
6. Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sequoias
7. California Rural Legal Assistance
8. California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
9. California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
10. Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey
11. Central California Legal Services, Inc.
12. Central Valley Children's Services Network
13. Clinica Sierra Vista
14. Community Food Bank
15. Community Services Employment Training (CSET)
16. Dress for Success Bakersfield
17. Easter Seals Central California
18. Every Neighborhood Partnership
19. Food Commons Fresno
20. FoodLink for Tulare County
21. Fresno Barrios Unidos
22. Fresno County Public Library
23. Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission
24. Fresno Housing Authority
25. Fresno Metro Ministry
26. Fresno Rescue Mission
27. Fresno/Madera Youth for Christ
28. Golden Empire Gleaners
29. HandsOn Central California/RSVP-Senior Corps
30. Hope Center, Inc
31. Kings Community Action Organization
32. Kings United Way
33. Latino Commission/Nuevo Comienzo
34. Life Goes On—Home Improvement, Inc.
35. Lindsay Healthy Start Family Resource Center
36. Madera Coalition for Community Justice
37. Madera County Food Bank
38. Madera Rescue Mission
39. Marjaree Mason Center
40. Office of Community and Economic Development at Fresno State
41. Proteus, Inc.
42. Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV)
43. River Tree Volunteers
44. Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Central Valley
45. Salvation Army
46. Salvation Army, Service Extension
47. Sanger Family Resource Center—Comprehensive Youth Services
48. Self-Help Enterprises
49. Selma Cares
50. Sequoia Riverlands Trust
51. Tree Fresno
52. Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners
53. United Way of Fresno County (staff 1)
54. United Way of Fresno County (staff 2)
55. United Way of Tulare County
56. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development
57. Valley Public Radio
58. Valley Teen Ranch
59. Westside Youth, Inc.
60. Whiskers Paws Hooves And Claws

Appendix B: Expert, Organizational Leader Interviews

In June 2015, the Fresno Regional Foundation conducted phone interviews with experts and leaders of community benefit organizations (CBOS) to gather more detailed information on impacts of the drought on San Joaquin Valley organizations. The Foundation interviewed the following people for these interviews:

1. Craig Martinez, Program Manager, The California Endowment
2. Geri Yang-Johnson, Community Development Officer, Wells Fargo Community Relations
3. Mike Dozier, Executive Director, Office of Community and Economic Development, California State University, Fresno
4. Sally Tripp, Area Specialist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development
5. Nikiko Masumoto, peach farmer
6. Nicole Zieba, City Manager, Reedley
7. Kristen Barnes, President and CEO, Kern Community Foundation
8. Chris Schneider, Executive Director, Central California Legal Services, Inc.
9. Stacy Gomez, Director of Legal Services, Marjoree Mason Center
10. Andrew Souza, President and CEO, Community Food Bank (Fresno)
11. Marion Standish, Program Director, The California Endowment

Appendix C: CBO Convenings

In July 2015, the Fresno Regional Foundation organized four workshops in the San Joaquin Valley to gather additional information on the drought's impact on community benefit organizations. The convenings were held in Fresno and Merced (on July 22), Visalia (July 29) and Bakersfield (July 30). The following non-profit and community representatives participated:

Fresno Convening, July 22

Al Hernandez, Community Equity Initiative
Andrea Evans, Valley Teen Ranch
Andy Souza, Community Food Bank
Baldwin Moy, California Rural Legal Assistance
Becky Kramer, Comprehensive Youth Services of Fresno
Charise Hansen, Fresno Regional Foundation
Charity Tokash, Resources for Independence Central Valley (RICV)
Chris Schneider, Central California Legal Services

Craig Martinez, The California Endowment
Erica Ybarra, Easter Seals Central California
Hugh Ralston, Fresno Regional Foundation
Joel Diringer, DA Diringer and Associates
Kathleen Mancebo, Comprehensive Youth Services of Fresno
Katie Gallo, Fresno Regional Foundation
Kelvin Alfaro, Fresno Regional Foundation
Kym Dildine, Community Food Bank
Leoncio Vasquez, Centro Binacional
Maria Erana, Radio Bilingue, Inc.
Mark Colley, Madera Coalition for Community Justice
Paul McLain, Economic Opportunities Commission, Fresno
Rico Guerrero, Fresno Regional Foundation
Sally Tripp, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Sarah Reyes, The California Endowment
Tom Matott, Fresno Metro Ministry
Zenaida Ventura Gonzalez, Centro Binacional

Merced Convening, July 22

Charise Hanson, Fresno Regional Foundation
Frank Huerta, Central California Legal Services
Hugh Ralston, Fresno Regional Foundation
Joel, Diringier, DA Diringier and Associates
Kelvin Alfaro, Fresno Regional Foundation
Marisol Aguilar, California Rural Legal Assistance
Noe Paramo, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Vicki Jones, Merced County Department of Public Health

Visalia Convening, July 29

Angel Avitia, Community Services Employment Training
Angie Villa, Community Services Employment Training
Caity Meader, Family Services of Tulare
Charise Hanson, Fresno Regional Foundation
Cyndee Garcia, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District
Darlene Tyndal, Reestablishing Stratford
Elva Beltran, Porterville Area Coordinating Council
Grace Munoz-Rios, Porterville Area Coordinating Council
Hugh Ralston, Fresno Regional Foundation
Irma Rangel, Woodlake Family Resource Center
Jeff Garner, Kings Community Action Organization
Linda Ledesma, Lindsay Family Resource Center

Mary Alice Escarsega-Fechner, Community Services Employment Training
Michael Brooks, Central California Legal Services
Michelle Murphy, Fresno Regional Foundation
Mr. Beltran, Porterville Area Coordinating Council
Paul Boyer, Self-Help Enterprises
Rosemary Caso, United Way of Tulare County
Sabrina Bustamonte, Tulare County, Office of Emergency Services
Sarah Ramirez, Food Link

Bakersfield Convening, July 30

Alfred Hernandez, California Rural Legal Assistance
Alyse Braaten, Kern Community Foundation
Annalisa Robles, The California Endowment
Ara Marderosian, Sequoia Forest Keeper
Charise Hanson, Fresno Regional Foundation
Colleen Cason, Digital & Analog Communications
Elaine McNearney, Dress for Success Bakersfield
Erie Johnson, Kern River Valley Revitalization
Fatima Hernandez, United Farm Worker Foundation
Hugh Ralston, Fresno Regional Foundation
Jeremy Tobias, Community Action Partnership of Kern
Juana Carbajal, United Farm Worker Foundation
Kristen Barnes, President and CEO, Kern Community Foundation
Ralph Martinez, Community Action Partnership of Kern
Sandra Flores, Fresno Regional Foundation
Sandy Gonzalez, Greenfield Family Resource Center

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ABOVE:
Millerton Lake's
dramatically low water level.

PHOTO: Neil Chowdhury,
California State University, Fresno