



Strengthening Cultural Competency in California's Domestic Violence Field for High-Need, Underserved Populations

Final Evaluation Report: Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, The Blue Shield of California Foundation (BSCF)’s program area Blue Shield Against Violence (BSAV) launched a project called “Strengthening Cultural Competency in California’s Domestic Violence Field for High-Need, Underserved Populations” (BSAV CC) to support and promote promising culturally competent practices within the domestic violence field. BSCF enlisted RDP Consulting (RDP) to manage the \$2.6 million initiative and to provide capacity-building services, and provided two-year grants to 17 community partners across the state of California. The BSAV CC Project specifically sought to support domestic violence-related outreach to Tribal communities, African Americans, and recent immigrant populations.

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) received a grant from BSCF to support the learning and evaluation of this project. Over the two years of the evaluation, SPR conducted 78 phone interviews with community partners, RDP consultants, project-level evaluators, and field leaders. SPR also conducted one-day visits to 11 programs—visits that included interviews with executive directors, board members, outreach staff, key program partners, and clients. Finally, SPR attended project convenings and events, reviewed project documentation (e.g., proposals, reports), and administered two rounds of a social networking survey to all community partners.

This Final Report highlights the outcomes of the two-year evaluation, at both the organizational and field levels.

Overview of BSAV CC Community Partners

The 17 BSAV CC Project grantees, referred to as community partners, were diverse in size, target population, and geographic location. They were generally very well established, with nine to 44 years serving their communities (26 years on average), and there was an even mix of small, medium, and large organizations in the cohort. Exhibit 1 presents a typology of the organizations participating in the initiative, each of which approached cultural competency in the domestic violence field somewhat differently. This exhibit also identifies the BSAV CC Project objectives that each community partner identified as its primary focus.



**Exhibit 1:
Organizational Foci of Community Partners**

There were three different types of community partners: broad-based domestic violence organizations, culturally specific organizations, and culturally specific domestic violence organizations.

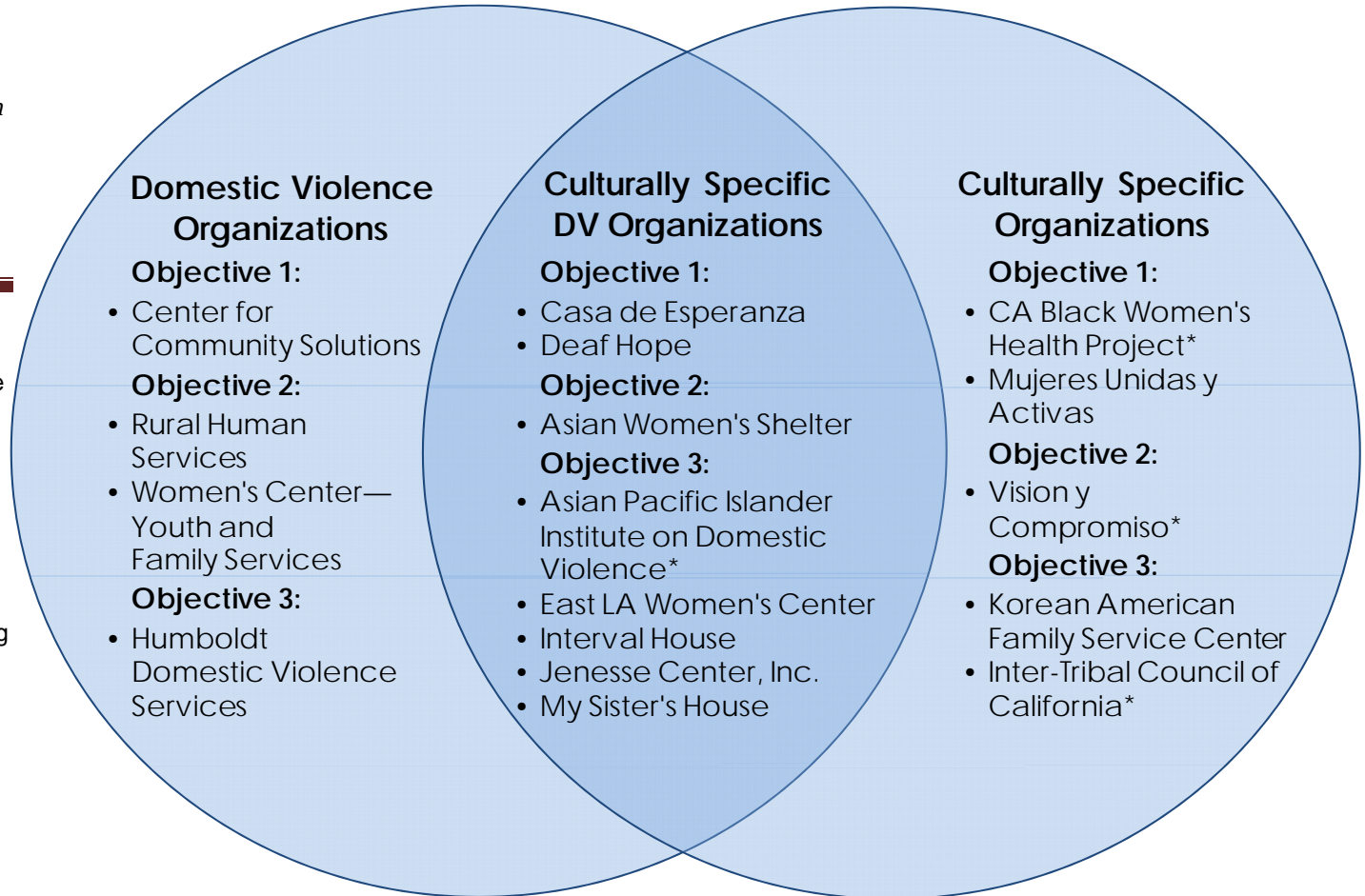
Each partner's projects mapped on to one of three initiative-level objectives, described below.

Partners with an asterisk were not direct service providers.*

Objective 1: Engaging domestic violence **survivors and community members** to increase awareness and practice of culturally competent, domestic violence-related outreach, prevention, and advocacy. Five community partners had this focus.

Objective 2: Strengthening an **individual organization's** existing domestic violence-related cultural competency efforts, practices, policies, or advocacy. Four community partners had this focus.

Objective 3: Promoting a more connected and culturally competent response to domestic violence **with institutional partners and new stakeholders**. Eight community partners had this focus.



As illustrated in the exhibit, there were three types of organizations in the BSAV CC cohort.

- **Broad-based domestic violence organizations** (4 total) were well-established domestic violence organizations that served all populations in need but used the grant to reach new populations, including Tribal communities, African Americans, and recent immigrants.
- **Culturally specific organizations** (5 total) were broad-based service or advocacy organizations for specific cultural populations that were working to expand their own or their partners’ capacity to provide domestic violence information and/or services to these populations.
- **Culturally specific domestic violence organizations** (8 total) specialized in providing culturally focused domestic violence intervention and prevention services and/or capacity building. These organizations tended to be quite small and under-resourced, but they served as vital connectors between mainstream organizations and organizations focused on specific cultural groups.

Six community partners used the grant for improvements in culturally competent services for Asian and Pacific Islanders, five did so for African Americans, four for Latinos, three for Tribal Communities, and two for Arab Americans. Community partners were attentive to the breadth of diversity within these priority populations, including Tribal, language, cultural, and religious differences, as well as the influence of immigrant status and issues of ability.

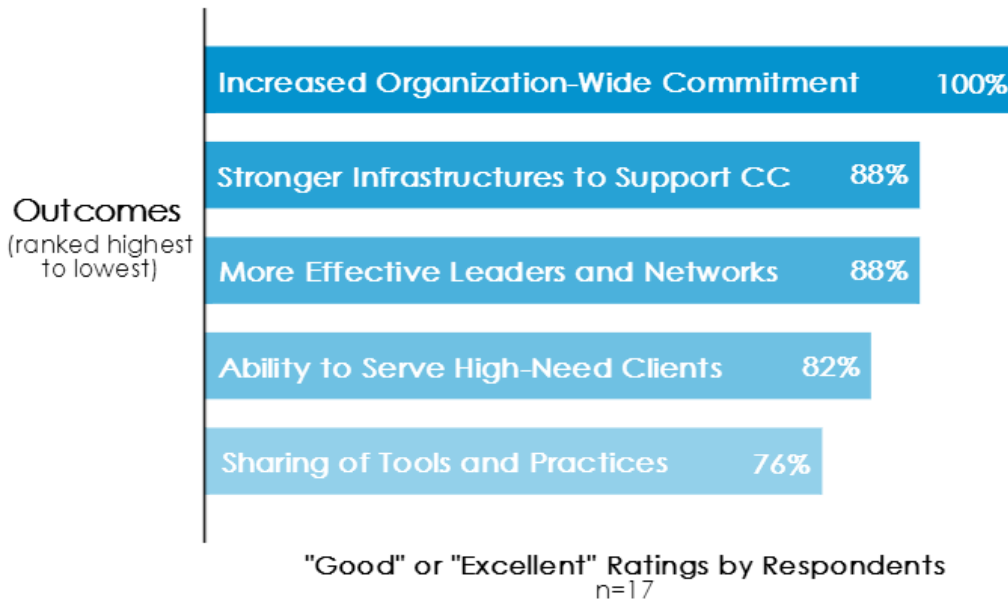
CULTURAL FOCUS OF GRANTS	
Asian and Pacific Islander	6
African American	5
Latino	4
Tribal Communities	3
Arab American	2

Overview of Outcomes

SPR tracked progress on core outcomes, including shifts in (1) the ability of community partners to engage and serve high need populations, (2) the level of organization-wide commitment to cultural competency, (3) plans and infrastructure to support culturally competent practices, (4) support for leaders and networks, and (5) the sharing of tools, resources, and practices.

As illustrated in Exhibit 2, community partners rated all outcomes positively. It appears that the project had the largest influence on organization-wide commitment, and the smallest on the sharing of tools and practices. In the following sections, we discuss each of these outcomes in more depth as they relate to each of the three core grant objectives: engaging survivors and community members; strengthening domestic violence organizations; and forming strategic partnerships.

**Exhibit 2:
Impact of BSAV Cultural Competency Grant on Core Outcomes**



Objective 1: Engaging Survivors and Community Members

[We] walk the journey alongside communities in a spirit of partnership.

- Beckie Masaki, APIIDV

The first objective of the BSAV CC Program was to engage domestic violence survivors and community members to increase awareness and practice of culturally competent domestic violence-related outreach, prevention, and advocacy. Community partners conducted needs assessments of survivors and community leaders as advocates; trained survivors and community leaders as health advocates; and conducted community outreach and education.

Most of the community partners (82 percent) felt that the grant had a “good” or “excellent” impact on their ability to serve high-need clients. Two-fifths (41 percent) reported sizable growth in the number of clients from the priority groups they served, at least in part because they were able to provide more linguistically and culturally appropriate services as well as expand the locations where clients could learn about and access services.

Community partners relied on culturally competent strategies that were *innovative*, in that they expanded and diversified entry points for domestic violence services

Bilingual and bicultural staff and volunteers enabled community partners to engage with priority populations. One community partner recruited and trained 11 volunteers who collectively spoke Arabic, Chaldean, Kurdish, and Farsi and reached at least 1,080 Iraqi community members.




(Exhibit 3).¹ Some focused on empowering survivors to become agents of change. These community partners created safe spaces for training where women could share stories and find strength from each other. Indeed, a participant in the Mujeres Unidas y Activas program said she could “feel [herself] changing” as she underwent training to become a peer educator.

The faith community emerged as an important partner, as well. For example, after discovering that some pastors and religious counselors were discouraging women from seeking help beyond the church, Korean American Family Services hosted two clergy conferences, reaching over 150 Korean-speaking clergy and domestic violence service providers.

Finally, a key role that some community partners played was to help women recognize how social and cultural norms can contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence. As a starting point, more than half of the community partners sought to develop an understanding of the nuances of gender oppression and violence in a given culture and how traditional values may be invoked to maintain the status quo. As Paul Tupaz of InterTribal Council of California noted, “empowerment needs to come from within.”

Exhibit 3:

Innovations in Domestic Violence Services, Practices, and Capacity Building

Promoting Survivor Leadership 	Working with Faith Community 	Challenging Cultural and Social Norms 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safe spaces that validate survivors' experiences • Be prepared to address issues of trauma and stigma • Have experienced facilitators that understand issues of DV within the priority community • Allow survivors time to grow into their roles as leaders and change makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold dialogues about DV at inter-faith conferences and events • Proactively outreach to diverse faiths • Explicitly align the goals of the DV movement with the goals of the faith community to promote peace • Prepare and disseminate educational materials for clergy that outline DV responses and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strong research-driven framework that articulates how cultural norms perpetuate and condone violence within priority community • Develop a strong understanding of the strengths and assets within each priority community that can be called on to resist those norms • Use these tools to guide conversations with survivors, but also broader populations, such as men, youth, and other community members

¹ According to BSCF/BSAV’s logic model, innovative practices: (1) expand and diversify points of entry for domestic violence services, (2) strengthen cultural competence in domestic violence provision, (3) promote collaboration between health providers and domestic services, or (4) are potential “game-changers” for domestic violence prevention.

Innovation was possible for many of the community partners because cultural competency was not just a value but was, as one of them put it, “in their DNA”—from the constitution of their boards to their approaches to leadership and risk taking and their willingness to share cultural knowledge and expertise with others. They were intentional about recruiting staff and board members with a strong cultural competency lens, and had well-developed frameworks for supporting survivors in a culturally competent way and for preventing domestic violence by uncovering its root causes.

Objective 2: Strengthening Domestic Violence Organizations

There has to be a readiness and capacity and willingness on the part of the community partners....And you have to be ready to receive them whatever way they come.

- Jara Dean Coffey, RDP Consulting

BSAV CC funded RDP to provide organizational capacity building to community partners and integrate it into their grant objectives. Recognizing that there were few effective tools to assess cultural competency and provide actionable feedback for domestic violence organizations on areas of strength and improvement, the BSAV CC supported the development of a cultural competence organizational self-assessment tool. RDP began this work with a needs and strengths assessment for each community partner using this tool (and early versions developed). They then combined individual technical assistance with a series of in-person workshops and webinars that brought organizations together to learn from and with each other, establish connections to expand outreach, and gain familiarity with useful tools and resources.

All of the community partners indicated that participating in BSAV CC led to better organization-wide integration and alignment of their commitment to prioritized outreach strategies. The majority (88 percent) also specifically said that participating led to stronger plans and infrastructures to support culturally competent practices in hiring, retention, personnel, and professional development. Ultimately, the community partners implemented multiple strategies to strengthen their provision of domestic violence services, diversify service entry points, and support community responses to domestic violence (Exhibit 5).



ORGANIZATIONAL WORKSHOPS



Logic Modeling Workshops

Workshops introduced community partners to logic models as an evaluative tool for sharing stories of impact. Community partners walked away with **a better understanding of logic modeling, tools/resources for logic modeling, and a framework for how to use logic models to advance their organizational work.**






Evaluative Assessment Workshops

These workshops introduced participants to the purpose, types, phases, and tools of evaluation, and guided them through the development of an evaluative assessment plan for their organizations. The key takeaways were **a deeper understanding of why, how, and when to engage in evaluative activity, as well as how to articulate the evaluative process to key stakeholders,** such as boards, staff, and local organizational chapters.

Community partners that exhibited the greatest gains in commitment to cultural capacity work focused on staff development, though a range of approaches were effective, including explicit actions—e.g., hiring and training staff or implementing new programs—and more implicit actions, such as the provision of time and space to reflect on culturally competent practices.

Mainstream domestic violence organizations that had strong partnerships with or buy-in from the communities they wished to serve showed the most movement in building infrastructure. Likewise, culturally specific domestic violence agencies that had the capacity to work with consultants on internal processes and policies, as well as culturally specific advocacy organizations that were able to leverage grant funds into sustainable staff positions, also experienced stronger gains. Community partners that showed the smallest increases were already highly engaged in the work prior to the initiative or were mainstream organizations that lacked support for the work at the executive leadership level.

Exhibit 5: Innovations in Organizational Capacity Building for Cultural Competency

Strengthening CC DV Service Provision 	Diversifying DV Service Entry Points 	Supporting Community Responses to DV 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct internal program assessments for culturally competent practices in language access and volunteer training • Hire diversity trainers/advocates and/or bilingual, bicultural staff experienced with domestic violence service provision • Require advisory teams to complete domestic violence training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold forums in high schools to increase numbers of survivors from different populations seeking services • Conduct needs and strengths assessments in target community • Form a community advisory board to assess and strategize outreach to target communities • Recruit and train women from target community as certified domestic violence counselors • Develop comprehensive organizational cultural competence plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regional convenings to build the capacity of target communities to address domestic violence • Conduct regional trainings for community health clinics on culturally competent domestic violence practices that address culture, social/community norms, public policies and legislation, litigation and judicial reform, and civic, social, and economic rights related to target communities • Provide cultural competence training for domestic violence staff and partner agencies • Ensure that training curricula address cultural norms around domestic violence

Objective 3: Building Networks and the Field

These opportunities for programs to connect with one another are so valuable, informative, uplifting, and appreciated.

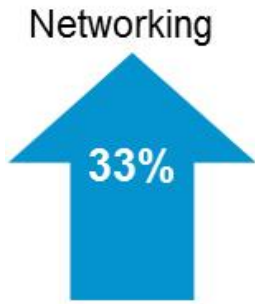
—Peer Learning Exchange participant

Overall, the BSAV CC Project had a strong effect on promoting more connected and culturally competent responses among institutional partners and new stakeholders. Most community partners (88 percent) reported “good” to “excellent” impact on the ability of leadership and networks to promote peer learning and sharing of best practices. Almost as many (76 percent) reported “good” to “excellent” impact on increased use or sharing of cultural competency tools, practices, and resources.

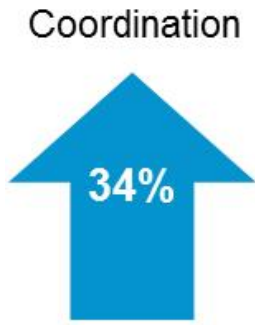
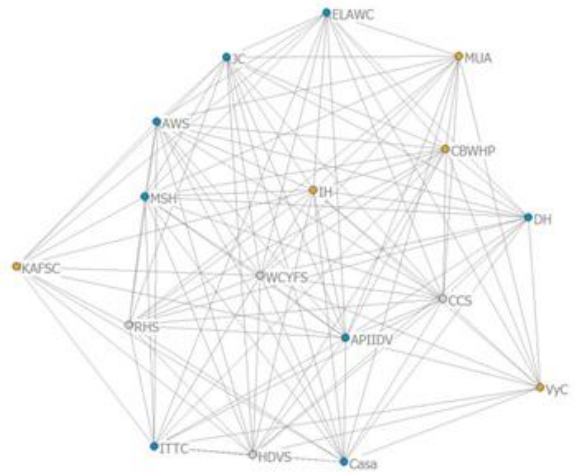
Connections can occur at progressively integrated levels, as community partners shift from *networking*, to *coordination*, to *collaboration*. As shown in Exhibit 6, most community partners at least occasionally communicated and had “loose” partnership roles (see first map in the exhibit); by the end of the project, more community partners (44 percent) are engaging in deeper collaboration with each other. As was true at the beginning of the project, culturally specific domestic violence organizations have continued to play a central role.

To understand strategic formation of partnerships over time, we used data from a social networking survey to compare partnerships and the connections of community partners to the broader field at the midpoint and near the conclusion of the project. Our analyses revealed expanding and deepening links between domestic violence and other organizations, as connections around cultural competency work evolved into a more integrated network. In particular, as shown in Exhibit 7, all of the community partners are now connected to each other, often through a range of shared partners. In addition, many community partners are now engaging organizations from outside of the domestic violence field.

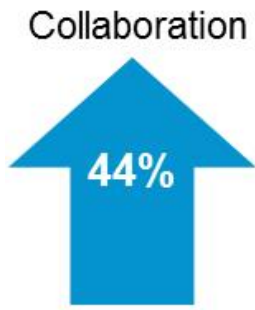
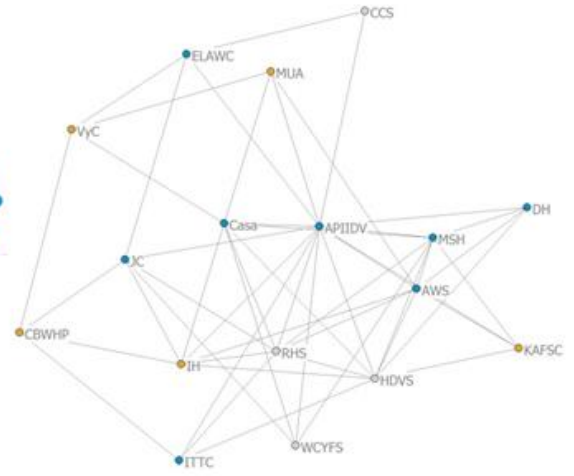
Exhibit 6: Increasing Partnerships Among Community Partners



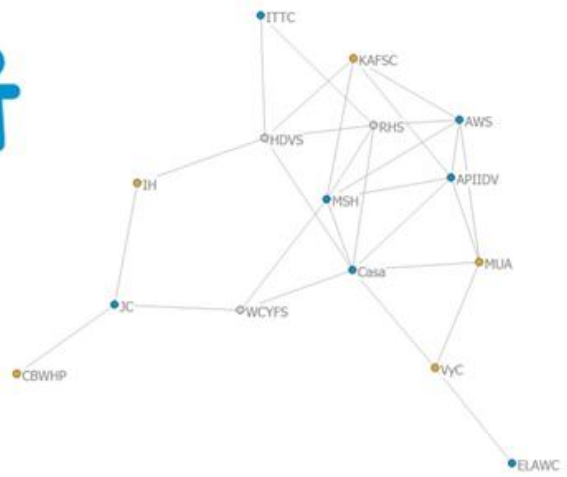
Increase in community partners being aware of each other, having loose partnership roles, and occasionally communicating



Increase in community grantees providing information to each other, having defined partnership roles, formal communications, and some shared decision-making

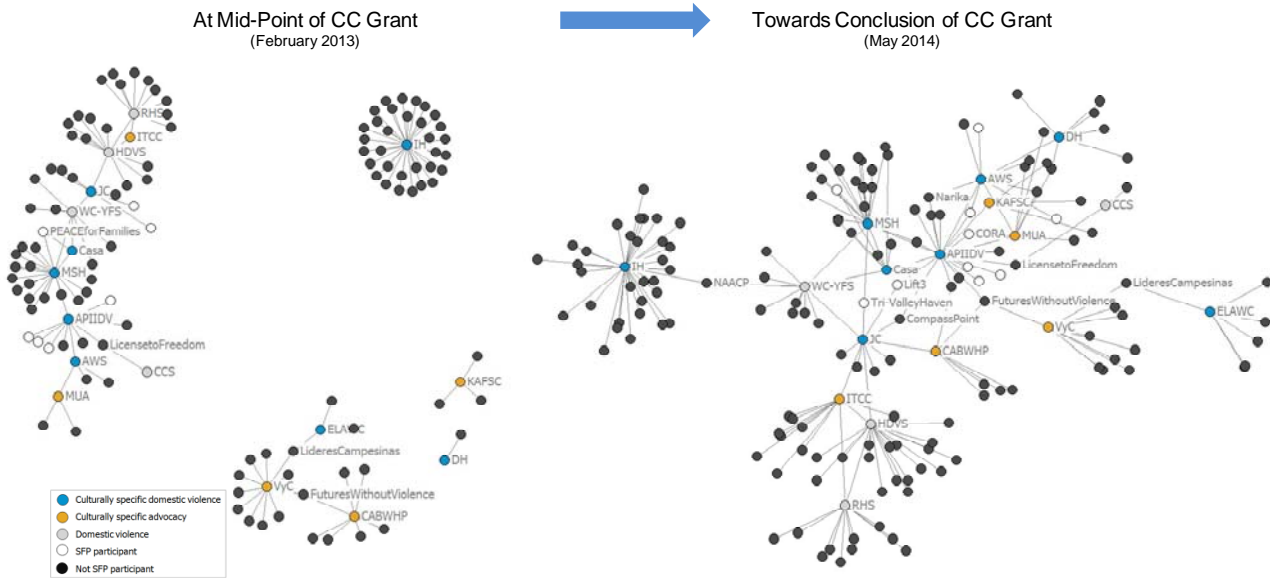


Increase in community grantees sharing ideas and resources, frequently communicating, and engaging in joint decision making



- Culturally specific domestic violence
- Culturally specific advocacy
- Domestic violence

Exhibit 7: Changes in Interactions and Partnerships Around Cultural Competency Work



Across the community partners’ grant work, innovative practices around collaboration and networking developed (see Exhibit 8). Specifically, they facilitated connections and networked with leadership in their communities. Casa de Esperanza, for example, recruited 25 female high school students to work on campaigns designed to bring greater awareness of domestic violence issues. Community partners also strengthened domestic violence networks by partnering with other organizations and promoting collaboration among providers. Mujeres Unidas y Activas met with several domestic violence shelters and organizations to expand their Peer Advocate model, for example, and Rural Human Services laid the groundwork for an advocate ride-along program with local law enforcement.

Exhibit 8: Innovations in Networking and Collaboration

<div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Facilitating Networked Leadership</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and develop leadership capacity of members and survivors Use train-the-trainer models to expand leadership capacity Bring together community leaders for convenings and trainings 	<div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Strengthening DV Networks</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and engage networks working in related fields Take a leadership role in convening existing DV coalitions Form new networks to integrate services for underserved groups 	<div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Promoting Collaborative Learning</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pair culturally specific DV providers with mainstream DV providers to promote cross-cultural learning Create the space for culturally specific providers to share innovative practices
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As illustrated in Exhibit 9, the BSAV CC Project enabled sharing of best practices and innovations through trainings, workshops, and conferences. One-time conferences reached the greatest number of participants, but sharing through a series of trainings or workshops allowed for deeper engagement. Overall, in-person engagement was preferred over more passive or virtual sharing.

Peer Learning Exchanges (PLEs) played a particularly important role in promoting this outcome. Eleven community partners self-organized five PLEs, which took a variety of forms, from one-on-one site visits to group workshops with external trainers. Goals also varied: Rural Human Services paired with My Sister’s House, for example, to receive technical assistance with Hmong outreach, prevention, and advocacy. Likewise, a cluster of four community partners serving API populations came together to advance social justice analysis and community empowerment.

**Exhibit 9:
Methods of Sharing and Examples of Content Shared**

<p>Trainings and workshops</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence: Introduced the 10x10x10 movement building, which provided grassroots training to engage survivors and built their capacity • DeafHope: Trained Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency (DCARA) staff; provided tools • East Los Angeles Women’s Center: Conducted two conferences on the <i>Promotores Contro la Violencia</i> Curriculum; received requests to put on other trainings • Korean American Family Services: Led a workshop for BSAV CC on engaging men; provided tools
<p>Conferences, convenings, and meetings</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mujeres Unidas Y Activas: Si Se Puede conferences provided informational resources/workshops to over 200 people and 25 organizations • My Sister’s House: Stepping Stones conference allowed over two dozen domestic violence organizations to (1) learn how different domestic violence shelters address cultural competency, (2) understand the nuances of working with API communities, and (3) identify ongoing steps to improve a domestic violence organization’s cultural competency plan
<p>Materials</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-Tribal Council of California: Created Tribal community engagement sheet • Interval House: Developed informational handouts now used by other organizations

Challenges and Facilitators to Achievement of Grant Objectives

In implementing their BSAV CC projects, community partners faced some common challenges that created delays in project timelines and, in some cases, altered the vision and structure of their grant-funded projects. The most significant obstacles to capacity building included:

- **High staff or executive leadership turnover**, as well as organizational transitions that influenced the timing and/or prioritization of grant activities;
- **Lack of institutional or executive leadership support** as well as internal politics and staff dynamics that took focus away from BSAV CC Project work;
- **Lack of institutional buy-in and support**, including, for example, distrust of the consulting process;
- **Compartmentalization** of cultural competency work, which was especially problematic if a key individual left the organization;
- **Challenges with recruiting** volunteers or advisory group members

Community partners that exhibited the most success throughout the initiative had a long history in and strong connections to the communities in which they worked and the support of executive leadership and boards of directors, and/or they were organizationally stable in terms of staffing. Their efforts were facilitated by several additional factors, including:

- **Safe spaces** for listening to the seldom-told stories of survivors
- **Welcoming attitudes** of staff members with respect to improving themselves and their organizations
- **Openness to changing course** when things were not working—for community partners and external consultants alike
- **Opportunities to share** and learn from each other, particularly at in-person convenings
- **Strong, inclusive leadership** that prioritized building capacity among staff and program stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

The BSAV CC Project yielded nine core lessons for direct service and capacity building providers that can help to diversify entry points for domestic violence services, strengthen cultural competence in service provision, and serve as potential “game changers” in domestic violence prevention:

- Culturally specific organizations are uniquely suited to provide a leadership role in domestic violence work.

- Cultural competency is an ongoing process and commitment, rather than a discrete set of practices.
- Engaging survivors and other community members in dialogue about domestic violence is a powerful way to build survivor leadership and shed light on the root causes of violence.
- Engaging influential leaders and organizations from priority communities, such as clergy and churches, is a powerful step towards shifting community norms around domestic violence.
- Engagement of new and diverse stakeholders—such as men, youth, and other community members—in dialogues about healthy relationships is essential for the reduction and eventual elimination of domestic violence.
- Cultural competency work and staff who have unique linguistic or cultural skills should be fully integrated rather than put into silos within domestic violence organizations.
- When seeking to reach out to new populations, it is important to resist essentialism by taking into account individuals’ multiple identities, including dimensions of race, ethnicity, immigrant status, language, and sexual orientation.
- Reliable assessment tools can be valuable for helping domestic violence organizations assess and set goals for enhancing cultural competence.
- Domestic violence organizations need to prioritize recruitment and retention of staff with language access skills and connections to the communities served.

Given the changing demographics of California, it is clear that attention to cultural competency needs to be a central tenet of efforts to end domestic violence. Although there are burgeoning partnerships among BSAV CC grantees, these remain vulnerable to the vacillations of funding support of cultural competency work and staff turnover. Sustainability of this work lies in the creation of new and more robust types of partnerships and alliances that can strengthen and promote learning within the network of providers working to end domestic violence.