

Equity in Community Work Group (EiCWG) Governance Structure and Action Plan

Approved by EiCWG members on July 1, 2025

Introduction

The Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative (SC4) brings together public agencies, academia, nonprofit and community-based organizations, and business and climate advocate leaders to advance regional solutions to climate change. Within the Collaborative, the Equity in Community Work Group (EiCWG) addresses the diverse and growing climate hazards facing the county, while centering equity and community resilience in all aspects of SC4's work.

Climate change is intensifying a wide range of hazards in Santa Clara County, including extreme heat, wildfires and wildfire smoke, impaired air quality, prolonged drought, severe storms and flooding, and the growing threat of sea level rise. Climate change is not equitable and results in these hazards impacting some communities first and worst. Children, seniors, people with disabilities, communities of color, limited English speakers, and those facing disparities in income, housing, transportation and health are disproportionately affected by both the direct and cascading impacts of climate change - ranging from health crises to displacement and economic hardship.

To address these challenges in the community, SC4's EiCWG plays a vital role and ensures that the voices and needs of historically marginalized and climate-vulnerable communities are at the forefront of the Collaborative's initiatives. This group works within our four cornerstones to ground our work and three annually updated core strategies to ensure we are paving a path closer to the four cornerstones.

Action Plan Summary

The EiCWG Action Plan serves as a roadmap for advancing equitable climate solutions in Santa Clara County. Guided by its mission to coordinate with communities and organizations, the EiCWG focuses on addressing the disproportionate impact of climate change on frontline and vulnerable communities. The action plan, informed by a comprehensive needs assessment of CBO members, outlines key strategies focused on resilience-minded funding, long-term community partnerships, and EiCWG membership expansion. These strategies are designed to provide tangible resources, foster collaboration between stakeholders, and create a supportive entry point for CBOs engaging in climate work. Accountability is ensured through transparent decision-making, equitable compensation for CBO participation, and shared governance structures. The EiCWG Action Plan will be updated annually to reflect evolving priorities and ensure its continued relevance in driving equitable climate action throughout the county.

The EiCWG Action Plan will be presented to the LAT and officially adopted by the EiCWG members by November 2025. This Plan was informed by a year-long process of assessing the needs of the CBO members within the work group. We are grateful for the thoughtful, clear and specific feedback the work group members provided that informed the first draft of the action plan.

Vision Statement

Based on EiCWG feedback through the member needs assessment, a vision statement has been developed to reflect the guiding principles of the work group. The vision statement is: *“We envision an equitable climate future where Santa Clara County’s marginalized communities most impacted by environmental injustice guiding collaborative solutions. Through intentional partnership-building across sectors, knowledge-sharing and community empowerment, we strive to embed equity in every climate initiative while fostering a resilient network of community-based organizations and government partners united in advancing environmental justice.”*

Mission & Goals

The mission of the EiCWG is to coordinate with communities and organizations across Santa Clara County to accelerate the equitable implementation of strategies and projects that advance solutions to climate change's disproportionate impact on frontline and vulnerable communities.

The EiCWG will achieve its mission by pursuing the following goals as cornerstones for the work group:

1. Work group members advise on Collaborative initiatives with an equity lens to guide the path towards long term systemic change and equitable climate resilience.
2. Create a network and support system for community-based organizations interested in climate work to advance a thoughtful and collaborative system across the county.
3. Provide and connect technical assistance in climate and environmental justice work to ensure more CBOs have an active role in bringing climate solutions to their communities
4. Advance community partnerships that yield successful long-term relationships between place-based community-based organizations and government systems so that more residents are receiving resources and resilience projects.

The EiCWG will achieve its goals by developing and implementing an annual action plan (included below), which will describe the specific activities, initiatives and projects of the EiCWG. The work plan must be presented to the LAT and County by a co-chair of the EiCWG. Because SC4 is administered by the County, the Collaborative and work groups must comply with County rules and regulations governing procurement, grants, contracting, lobbying, donations, etc.

Membership & Leadership

The EiCWG is open to any organizational representative who serves Santa Clara County with an interest in:

- Promoting climate action and environmental justice
- Advancing adaptation, mitigation, and resilience in climate change
- Planning equitable solutions to a variety of climate impacts including flooding, extreme heat, sea level rise, and wildfire
- Providing community services that flank climate change education and resilience initiatives
- Managing infrastructure or open space for equity and resilience
- Monitoring equity and justice at the intersection with climate change

The County of Santa Clara encourages participation from jurisdictions in Santa Clara County, public agencies, community-based organizations, academia partners, and environmental stakeholders along with any other organization who expresses interest in participating. EiCWG members are not required to be official SC4 participants, which entails signing a [Commitment Letter](#) and engaging with the broader Collaborative. However, only EiCWG members who are SC4 participants will be able to receive compensation for attending meetings and activities.

EiCWG will provide guidance pertaining to the strategic direction, advance defined objectives, and lead and/or participate in initiatives as needed. There are no dues to participate in either the work group or the Collaborative.

The EiCWG is led in partnership with SC4's Equity Implementation partner, Climate Resilient Communities, along with staff from County of Santa Clara's Office of Sustainability and Resilience. This model of co-leadership is meant to demonstrate the advanced adaptive capacity when small, grassroots organizations join forces with large governance systems to advance equitable solutions at the local level. In collaboration with County staff, Climate Resilient Communities will assist with setting EiCWG agendas, facilitating meetings, and other communication or coordination as needed. CRC as the chair of EiCWG is also responsible for providing written or verbal updates on the EiCWG's progress in preparation for bi-annual Collaborative meetings. County staff will support CRC as the EiCWG by providing updates on the progress of the EiCWG at LAT meetings and Collaborative meetings as requested. CRC may be supported by County staff and will provide final approval for all EiCWG initiative formation and selection of partners for leadership within initiatives.

Meeting Logistics and Expectations

The EiCWG will meet quarterly for two to two and a half hours with a preference to meet in person and in community as frequently as possible. Meeting topics will focus on the EiCWG goals stated above in pursuit of a more equitable climate action plan and how priority projects will be implemented within Santa Clara County. Meeting topics may produce findings, recommendations, or discussion topics to be presented to the LAT of the Collaborative. The

LAT may incorporate these items into the agenda of Collaborative meetings. CRC, County staff as part of SC4 Management/Leadership Team who support EiCWG are responsible for providing updates to the LAT or Collaborative as requested.

EiCWG Compensation Eligibility Criteria

Due to generous funding provided by local philanthropic organizations, this work group uniquely has an opportunity to provide funding for grassroots community-based organizations to receive funding for their time spent attending up to four (4) quarterly work group meetings and up to two (2) supplemental trainings per year provided by the EiCWG. Eligibility criteria were established by Climate Resilient Communities to work to address historic inequities and underutilization of the grassroots nonprofits that are deeply rooted in vulnerable communities and would not otherwise be engaged in government systems, such as a climate collaborative. County staff and CRC are responsible for selecting CBOs eligible for compensation and CRC will process payments to each CBO within four weeks of each EiCWG meeting or training the CBO attends. CBO MOUs will be reviewed on an annual basis by County staff and CRC. Annual review will include assessing how many CBOs were compensated for their time spent within EiCWG and if the eligible criteria are making progress towards the intended goals of fair compensation or should be modified, as funding allows.

Compensation Conditions

Eligibility criteria include being federally recognized as an independent or fiscally-sponsored 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and the organization's physical office is in a Santa Clara County frontline community that is underutilized and underserved by government systems. To receive compensation for participation in the Equity in Community Work Group (EiCWG), organizations must meet all the following eligibility requirements:

- 501(c)3 Nonprofit Status: The organization must be federally recognized as a 501(c)3 nonprofit.
- Physical Presence in Target Community: The organization must have a physical office located within a Santa Clara County frontline community that is underutilized and underserved by government systems.
- Community Representation: The organization must directly represent, serves and has the built trust of the residents and workers of the Santa Clara County community in which it is based.
- Leadership and Engagement: The organization must play a key role in building community leadership and empowering local residents.

Eligible organizations will receive compensation for the following activities:

- Attending up to four (4) quarterly EiCWG meetings per year.
- Participating in up to two (2) supplemental EiCWG-provided trainings or site visits per year.

- Attending the annual meeting of the Collaborative

Additional Principles for Equitable Compensation

To ensure fairness and transparency, the following principles and practices are embedded in the compensation process:

- Transparency: Clear communication of compensation rates, payment timelines, and expectations for participation.
- Respect for Expertise: Compensation rates should reflect the value of community members' expertise and contributions, comparable to others providing similar input.
- Flexibility: Payment methods and timelines should accommodate the needs and preferences of participating organizations, reducing barriers to participation.
- Feedback and Review: Annual reviews will assess the effectiveness of the eligibility criteria and compensation process, with adjustments made as needed, as funding allows, to ensure continued equity and inclusivity.

Core Strategies informed by EiCWG Cornerstones

Using the EiCWG Cornerstones and the advice of the CBO members of the EiCWG, the work group will use three core strategies to inform our mission and vision for a more equitable and resilient Santa Clara County. These strategies include resilience-minded funding, long-term community partnerships, and EiCWG network expansion.

Core Strategy 1: Resilience-minded Funding

Informed by clear feedback from the members of the EiCWG, the Action Plan of EiCWG must include clear commitments to advancing funding opportunities that provide more tangible resources and partnerships for community resilience and climate action in Santa Clara County. The EiCWG is committed to working collaboratively to develop both internal and external funding opportunities. The table below shows the current funding streams that support the EiCWG.

Funding Stream	Internal or External	EiCWG Role	FY'25-'26 Target
EiCWG Maintenance	Internal	CRC and County lead ongoing annual renewal of funding	\$50,000 (including CBO compensation, food and venue rental for EiCWG meetings)
SC4 Resilience Fund	Internal	CBO advisement, flanked support in planning for equitable implementation for CBO subawards	2 paid CBOs involved in Resilience Fund Advisory Committee,

Public and Private Grant Writing Trainings	External	SCC Sustainability & Resilience Dept and CRC lead trainings and facilitate initial support for grant applications	At least 2 trainings
--	----------	---	----------------------

In 2025, the EiCWG has a goal to pursue at least four funding opportunities in the form of private and public grants with an intention to subaward to CBO work group members. We will also continue to provide updates and involve the EiCWG meaningfully in the development of SC4's Resilience Fund, including bringing on two stipend eligible CBOs into the Fund Advisory Committee with the hopes of equity at the forefront and in the foundation of the Resilience Fund.

Core Strategy 2: Long-term Community Partnerships

The integrity of each member of the EiCWG member is prided on the fact that each organization is dedicated to providing resources, materials and information to their communities that helps people and the planet be better prepared for what is ahead of us. The EiCWG is committed to flanking existing integrity through advancing community partnerships between stakeholders who serve the same community to be aligned in purpose and vision and successfully complete projects that result in climate resilience.

The role of the County of Santa Clara staff and CRC as co-leads of the EiCWG is to foster connections between CBOs, private sector initiatives and government jurisdictions and act as the appropriate support as the relationship becomes solidified over time.

Concurrently and ongoing, each EiCWG member is also looked at with respect and value to act as the connector to other CBOs in the room or government jurisdictions. This might look like co-applying for a grant when a fellow EiCWG member CBO who needs flanked support to make a more compelling application based on reach, target audience, scope of project, etc. As part of each organization's membership, it is recommended that every organization be open and curious to pursue partnerships with fellow organizations in the EiCWG and within SC4. Asking for what the organization needs, highlighting unique skill sets and opportunity zones and being receptive to potential partner requests are values we expect of each EiCWG member.

In 2025, EiCWG is committed to continuing to explore opportunities for CBO members to be warmly introduced into new partnerships with organizations that had not previously engaged with. Our goal is to explore what this process looks like with CRC and County led development of at least two case studies to understand the depth and breadth of EiCWG co-leadership's role in connecting CBOs to new partnerships and pursuing funding opportunities collaboratively. We will also be mindful of what the process looks like to have direct CBO to CBO relationship building that organically happens during quarterly meetings and track the success of networking and partnerships that evolve in these EiCWG meeting spaces.

Special Action Plan:

1. Add all active EAiCWG CBOs to SC4 Stakeholder Map
2. Facilitate field trips with jurisdictional key players like Valley Water, Silicon Valley Community Fund and specific jurisdictional partners to meet
3. CBO to CBO trainings and capacity building workshops

FY'25-'26 Target	Internal (within SC4) or External	EiCWG Role
Add all active CBOs within EiCWG to SC4 Stakeholder Map	Internal	County of Santa Clara and CRC co-lead adding CBOs, CBOs learn how to add themselves and others in Augst EiCWG meeting, and explore how to create spotlight function for community needs/priorities
Key player site visits across Santa Clara County (Goal: 2 in FY2025/2026)	Internal	County of Santa Clara and CRC co-facilitate the engagement of key players including Valley Water, SFEI, etc that would benefit from meeting CBOs SC4 believes should collaborative to make the data real, relevant and relatable to their communities
CBO 1:1 Mentorship and Training	Internal, resulting in external partnerships	County of Santa Clara and CRC co-design mentorship sessions and prioritize information sharing around similar interest groups and programmatic initiatives **Recommended prioritization AFTER updating SC4 Stakeholder Map

Core Strategy 3: EiCWG Network Expansion

The Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative is dedicated to continued expansion to bring more stakeholders into climate work and further resilience for all communities in Santa Clara County. With this in mind, the Equity in Community Work Group will continue to provide dedicated outreach and engagement to bring community-based organizations into this work by way of joining the EiCWG.

The EiCWG co-facilitators are committed to expanding the Collaborative's network with a specific emphasis as being the new membership for community-based organizations who are entering climate work and government-led coalitions for the first time. EiCWG acts as a safety net and supportive entry point for community-based organizations of a variety of skill sets and focus in Santa Clara County.

In 2025, the EiCWG is setting a goal to explore what the adaptive capacity of the EiCWG it relates to equitable EiCWG membership expansion. We will do so in the search of understanding what work group members feel is acceptable and reasonable criteria for

compensation, designing a streamlined process for outreach and orientation, and distributing stipends in an institutional and time sensitive manner.

Table C shows the target actions and roles for the EiCWG in FY 2025-26

FY'25-'26 Target	Internal (within SC4) or External	EiCWG Role	Type of Community Partnership
Bring a CBO from your personal network to join an EiCWG meeting or SC4 annual meeting	Internal	EiCWG Members	CBOs-CBOs
Create a robust compensation distribution system that defines sustainable membership growth parameters for future expansion	Internal	CRC and County of Santa Clara	Governance-CBOs
Streamlined Outreach and Orientation Process, including defined best practices of positioning messaging	Internal	CRC and County of Santa Clara with CBO feedback	Governance-CBOs
Find and engage CBOs in topic areas that are not represented in the room including public health systems (plus mental health), housing systems, food systems	Internal	CRC and County of Santa Clara and EiCWG Members	Governance-CBOs

Accountability

The Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative, the County of Santa Clara and Climate Resilient Communities as the Equity Implementation partner established Collaborative partner's obligations to CBOs, including transparent decision-making processes with documented integration of community input, equitable compensation structures for participation and advisory contributions, and shared fiscal governance through CBO insight and feedback. These commitments ensure CBOs maintain formal oversight authority over resources allocation while requiring government jurisdictions to implement accessibility standards and disclosure protocols for all partnership activities.

The EiCWG Action Plan will be readily available to all EiCWG and broader SC4 members via the Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative's website. The Action Plan will be updated annually and adopted at the beginning of each fiscal year upon a work group assessment of that year's intended actions and recommended adjustments for next fiscal year. This ensures that the priorities of the current EiCWG members are reflected in each year's adoption of the Action Plan with the clear legacy of past iterations of the Action Plan.

Appendix A: Roles, Terms, Responsibilities, Meetings & Appointment of Collaborative Participants

Role	Term	Responsibility	Meeting Participation (* optional)	Appointment
LAT Member	Up to 2 years; renewable	Provide operational and strategic direction to Collaborative Approve EiCWG facilitator	LAT meetings (4-6/year) Collaborative Meetings (1-2/year)	Appointed by County
Collaborative Participant	N/A	Participate in Collaborative meetings and initiatives	Collaborative Meetings (1-2/year)	Sign letter of membership commitment
EiCWG Member	N/A	Support development and implementation of EiCWG Action Plan	EiCWG meetings (4/year) Annual Collaborative meetings	Attendance
Equity Implementation Partner/EiC WG Co-chair	N/A	Lead development and implementation of EiCWG action plan Report progress to LAT Set agendas and facilitate EiCWG meetings Co-approve community partnership formation with County staff Co-approve nomination of community partnership leadership with County staff	EiCWG meetings (4/year) Collaborative meetings (1-2/year) Community partnership meetings* (ad hoc)	Nomination approved by LAT and County

