



**CALIFORNIA  
ENERGY COMMISSION**



California Energy Commission  
Clean Transportation Program

## **FINAL PROJECT REPORT**

# **The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project**

**Supporting a More Inclusive, Diverse,  
Equitable, Accessible, and Local Clean  
Transportation Future**

**Prepared for: California Energy Commission**

**Prepared by: Foundation for California Community Colleges**



FOUNDATION *for* CALIFORNIA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

**June 2025 | CEC-600-2025-020**

# California Energy Commission

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) would like to acknowledge and thank the community-based organizations (CBO), community colleges, and regional and statewide partners, who participated in the Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, Accessible, and Local (IDEAL) Communities Partnership Project and provided essential input, support, and feedback to the project.

The community benefits framework listening sessions would not have been possible without the support of Making Hope Happen Foundation, Uplift San Bernardino, Mujeres Empresarias Tomando Accion (META), the Akoma Unity Center, and their amazing staff, including Karen Suarez, Noraly Sainz, Heather Zappia, Olivia Ortiz, and Maria Ramirez. Additional feedback was provided by Leslie Aguayo, formerly at the Greenlining Institute and currently serving as Senior Advisor for Transportation and Energy Justice at the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

We'd also like to thank the participants of those sessions, including the community members at Akoma Unity Center, community members of META, Karla López del Río of Community Action Partnership – Riverside, Alex Avila of Youth Action Project, Nika Hague of GRID Alternatives — Inland Empire, and Matthew Mena of Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity Initiative.

The IDEAL Communities Forum, the capstone event of the project, would not have been possible without the participation and support of our community partners and passionate community college students who participated in the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassadors Pilot. The students provided a voice for their communities and helped build awareness of the California Energy Commission's (CEC) Clean Transportation Program (CTP). Presenters at the Forum included Access Clean California, Casa Familiar, Comité Cívico del Valle, Community Services Unlimited, East Oakland Collective, GRID Alternatives, Native American Environmental Protection Coalition, and Self-Help Enterprises.

Lastly, FoundationCCC thanks the CEC staff who supported the IDEAL Project and demonstrated their commitment to making the impact and investments of the CTP more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible, and localized. Without the contributions of each and every one of these project partners, the goal of an IDEAL clean transportation future could not be realized.

## **PREFACE**

Established in 2007 by Assembly Bill 118 (2007) and extended to July 1, 2035, by Assembly Bill 126 (Reyes, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2023), the Clean Transportation Program provides about \$95 million of funding per year. The Clean Transportation Program Investment Plan determines funding allocations across various categories including workforce training and development. The CEC is committed to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, ensuring that all Californians have an opportunity to participate in and directly benefit from programs and services, and supporting in-state employment, in-state manufacturing, and state/local economic development. Furthermore, the CEC will seek to provide more than 50 percent of Clean Transportation Program funds from this investment plan toward projects that benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities. AB 126 formally requires this goal to be met starting January 1, 2025. The CEC is working to quantify these benefits in ways that go beyond measuring funding within a given location and will continue to investigate new metrics to ensure these investments enhance equity within the state.

# ABSTRACT

The document is a final project report for the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project, which aims to promote inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible local clean transportation solutions in California. The final report for the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project documents the activities and lessons learned during the project period. Key milestones and deliverables (goods and services) are discussed, including an assessment of the California Energy Commission's (CEC) Clean Transportation Program's outreach and engagement activities and the pilot of the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassador Program. The report also summarized the IDEAL Communities Forum, a capstone event that engaged a broad range of stakeholders on the work of the project. Lastly, the report summarized findings and recommendations based upon the work conducted during the project period.

**Keywords:** Accessibility, charging, clean, community, disadvantaged communities, diversity, electric vehicles, engagement, environmental justice, equity, funding, infrastructure, local, resources, students, technical assistance, zero-emission vehicles

Please use the following citation for this report:

Zeuner, Brett, Stephanie Schaaf, Xan Urso, et al. 2023. *The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project: Supporting a More Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, Accessible, and Local Clean Transportation Future*. California Energy Commission. Publication Number: CEC- 600-2025-020.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Local (IDEAL) Communities Partnership Project, documented in the final report prepared for the California Energy Commission (CEC) by the Foundation for California Community Colleges, aimed to create a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible, and local clean transportation future. The project focused on engaging underserved communities disproportionately affected by climate change through the Clean Transportation Program (CTP), which allocates about \$95 million annually.

Key activities included assessing the geographic distribution of CTP investments, developing an outreach and engagement plan, and launching the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassador Program. The project culminated in the IDEAL Communities Forum, which brought together stakeholders to discuss clean transportation needs and opportunities. The report highlights the importance of intentional community engagement, encouraging participation, creating accountability in feedback processes, coordinating investments, and investing in youth for long-term impact. Recommendations emphasize the need for sustained and flexible funding for outreach and engagement to build and maintain community relationships.

## Introduction

The section discusses California's efforts to address climate change impacts on underserved communities through inclusive programs and partnerships.

- California has sought to address climate change impacts faced by underserved communities through inclusive programs and partnerships.
- California has recognized the disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income, minority, and vulnerable populations.
- The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project aimed to enhance participation from disadvantaged communities in the Clean Transportation Program.
- The CEC has committed to allocating more than 50 percent of CTP funds to projects benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities.
- Community listening sessions were launched to better understand the needs and barriers faced by these communities.
- The IDEAL project aligned with the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) goals for statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions and carbon neutrality by 2045.
- Achieving climate goals will require sustained engagement and support from state agencies to ensure an equitable clean transportation system.

## Clean Transportation Program Assessment

The section discusses the assessment of the Clean Transportation Program, focusing on community engagement and funding distribution.

- The Clean Transportation Program assessment aimed to gather public perceptions and enhance engagement, especially in under-resourced communities.
- The assessment analyzed CTP investments from March 17, 2008, to March 17, 2021, across eight project types.



- A total of 77 organizations were surveyed, with only 10 responses collected, revealing that 70 percent had not received technical assistance in navigating or applying for Clean Transportation Program funding.
- Stakeholder interviews were conducted with 22 participants, resulting in a near 50 percent response rate from community-based organizations and workforce development experts.
- Key needs identified included increased flexibility in application processes and dedicated funding for prioritized communities. Increased flexibility was necessary to reduce barriers for under resourced communities and smaller organizations that often face challenges navigating complex or rigid funding requirements, helping to ensure more equitable access to funding opportunities.
- Respondents emphasized the importance of tailored technical assistance to meet the specific needs of under-resourced communities, such as guidance on grant applications, language support, and help aligning proposals with funding criteria.
- The findings suggest that CTP should adopt strategies to ensure equitable access to funding and resources for disadvantaged communities.
- The assessment used CalEnviroScreen 3.0 data to map funding distribution and identify areas lacking CTP support. CalEnviroScreen 3.0 is a mapping tool that helps identify California Communities that are most affected by many sources of pollution, and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution's effects.

## **Outreach and Engagement to Support Clean Transportation in IDEAL Communities**

This section details the outreach efforts of the IDEAL project to engage diverse communities in clean transportation initiatives.

- The IDEAL project developed an outreach and engagement plan to enhance community engagement in clean transportation investments across California.
- The project team created a working definition of an "IDEAL community" to identify communities disproportionately impacted by environmental and social harms.
- Hundreds of individuals from various groups, including community organizations and government officials, were engaged throughout the project.
- The project team organized three community listening sessions, with two in-person and one virtual, to gather feedback from community members.
- The first in-person session was hosted by Making Hope Happen Foundation, providing childcare to enhance community participation.
- More than 200 community-based organizations were informed about the Clean Transportation Program Community Benefits Framework Workshop.
- The project also supported a listening session for the White House Council on Environmental Quality to guide infrastructure funding decisions.
- The IDEAL project fostered new partnerships and relationships with community-based organizations to promote clean transportation initiatives.

## **ZEV IDEAL Student Ambassadors**

The section details the recruitment, training, and community engagement efforts for clean transportation of the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassador Program .The program empowers students to lead tailored, peer-driven outreach promoting ZEV education and enrollment through training, mentorship, and community engagement support.

- The IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassador Pilot Program engaged California community college students to promote environmental equity and clean transportation.
- Eight ambassadors were selected from 26 applicants across 13 colleges, representing five regions in California.
- The program included training on clean mobility, environmental justice, and outreach strategies, with sessions held from October 2021 to November 2021.
- Ambassadors received a stipend of \$1,500 and used an outreach toolkit to engage their communities effectively.
- Monthly check-ins and weekly newsletters promoted communication and support between the ambassadors and IDEAL staff.
- Community profiles were created to assess zero-emission vehicle infrastructure needs and public perceptions, aiding in targeted outreach.
- The program emphasized diversity, equity, and inclusion, resulting in a diverse cohort of ambassadors.
- Overall, the initiative aimed to raise awareness of California's zero-emission vehicle policies and solicit community feedback for future investments.

## **IDEAL Communities Forum**

The IDEAL Communities Forum focused on zero-emission vehicle challenges and opportunities, highlighting community needs and stakeholder collaboration.

- The IDEAL Communities Forum took place virtually August 3, 2022, engaging more than 70 stakeholders from various sectors.
- Six IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassadors presented their communities' mobility challenges, emphasizing the need for improved charging infrastructure and transportation options.
- One student in Hemet (Riverside County) highlighted only 13 alternative fueling stations within 10 miles, compared to 52 in neighboring Temecula.
- Another student from Salinas (Monterey County) noted only 17 charging stations, with none in East Salinas, impacting EV accessibility.
- The forum featured community-based organizations discussing local mobility needs, with a focus on equity and environmental justice.
- The Communities in Charge program aims to deploy \$250 million in incentives for equitable EV infrastructure, prioritizing under-resourced communities.
- Attendees expressed the need for visible charging stations and infrastructure before transitioning to electric vehicles.

- The forum concluded with discussions on workforce development opportunities for installing EV charging stations, emphasizing the importance of skilled labor.

## **Recommendations**

The section discusses strategies for inclusive transportation investment and community engagement in California.

- The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project aims to create an inclusive clean transportation future in California, focusing on historically underinvested communities.
- Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic/Latino communities are prioritized to address transportation inequities stemming from systematic disinvestment.
- Regular evaluation of outreach strategies is necessary to adapt to community needs and ensure effective engagement.
- Incentives for community participation should be included in project planning, with various types of incentives identified, such as purpose-driven and material incentives.
- Accountability in feedback processes is crucial to maintain trust and ensure community input is valued and used.
- Increased coordination between clean mobility programs is needed to align funding timelines and reduce restrictions on stacking funds.
- The student ambassador program highlighted the importance of investing in youth for long-term engagement in clean mobility efforts.
- Sustained funding and internal capacity are essential for maintaining community relationships and effective outreach efforts.
- The Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Group (DACAG) is an 11-member group established by Senate Bill 350 to advise the California Energy Commission and California Public Utilities Commission on matters related to clean energy and pollution reduction programs in disadvantaged communities. DACAG also recommended prioritizing investments that directly benefit low-income, rural, and tribal communities.

# CHAPTER 1:

## Introduction

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As California grapples with the realities of climate change, there is a well-established, and growing, body of research and lived experiences that demonstrates the disproportionality of the climate crisis' impacts across underserved communities. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), the impacts of climate change will make worse the already quantifiable disparities in quality of life for low income, minority, under-employed, elderly, and undereducated populations.<sup>1</sup> California continues to lead efforts to acknowledge, understand, and address these disproportionate impacts and requisite solutions, including efforts by the California Energy Commission (CEC).

These efforts are complicated, however, by the reality that the responses and solutions to the climate crisis, meant to ease related impacts, may do the opposite. Climate action that is not implemented with intentional consideration of the most vulnerable and impacted populations has the possibility to exacerbate the exact harms of which the project team seeks to prevent, especially for the most vulnerable among us. This assertion is supported by the Fourth National Climate Assessment which states that:

*"Marginalized populations may also be affected disproportionately by actions to address the underlying causes and impacts of climate change, if they are not implemented under policies that consider existing inequalities."*<sup>2</sup>

The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project was established to support the California Energy Commission (CEC), through its Clean Transportation Program (CTP), in achieving the CEC's goal of "increasing the participation of disadvantaged and underrepresented communities from a diverse range of geographical regions and populations."<sup>3</sup> The CEC and CTP recognize the critical importance of having an inclusive, diverse, and accessible investment strategy that centers equity and localized community benefits. *These ideals are at the core of IDEAL.*

The primary objectives of the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project are listed below. These objectives are contextualized within the broader scope of climate-related efforts of the CEC, CTP, and other state agencies, like the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

IDEAL Communities Partnership project objectives include:

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1 U.S. EPA. September 2021. [Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impacts](https://www.epa.gov/cira/social-vulnerability-report). EPA 430-R-21-003, [www.epa.gov/cira/social-vulnerability-report](https://www.epa.gov/cira/social-vulnerability-report).

2 USGCRP, 2018: *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II*: [Reidmiller, D.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Maycock, and B.C. Stewart (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 1515 pp. doi: 10.7930/NCA4.2018.

3 Tuggy, Benjamin. 2024. [2023–2024 Investment Plan Update for the Clean Transportation Program](https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/clean-transportation-program/clean-transportation-program-investment-8). California Energy Commission. Publication Number: CEC-600-2023-029-SD, <https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/clean-transportation-program/clean-transportation-program-investment-8>.

1. Strengthening the trust of community-based organizations (CBOs), community members, and other stakeholders toward the CEC and the [CTP](#).
2. Increasing capacity of CBOs and other stakeholders in priority communities to plan for CTP funding opportunities.
4. Assessing technical assistance and supporting CTP project application, implementation, and success in communities with limited capacity.
5. Expanding the reach of the CTP to include IDEAL communities in the state.
6. Identifying direct and indirect CTP benefits in, to, and adjacent to IDEAL communities.
7. Piloting the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassador Program.
8. Hosting the IDEAL Community Forum.

The first four letters of IDEAL: inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible are addressed in the opening paragraph of the excerpt below, from the CTP's FY 2023-2024 Investment Plan:

*"The CEC is committed to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, ensuring that all Californians have an opportunity to participate in and directly benefit from programs and services, and supporting in-state employment, in-state manufacturing, and state/local economic development. Furthermore, the CEC will seek to provide more than 50 percent of Clean Transportation Program funds from this Investment Plan toward projects that benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities."*<sup>4</sup>

The "L" in IDEAL appears above as a more nuanced concept with an emphasis on geographic definitions of locality as defined by California statutes and policy. Disadvantaged and low-income communities are formal terms used by various California state agencies to conceptualize and define specific geographies using a socioeconomic framework. Low-income communities are defined as "communities that are at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income," while disadvantaged communities are defined as "communities within the top 25 percent scoring areas under CalEnviroScreen, as well as areas of high pollution and low population (such as ports)."<sup>5</sup>

Despite progress on reaching its IDEAL goals, the CEC and CTP have acknowledged the need for further and continued efforts. The Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Group (DACAG) has made recommendations to the CEC to "prioritize investments that directly benefit low-income, disadvantaged, rural, and tribal communities and conduct outreach and engagement in partnership with local community-based organizations."<sup>6</sup> Additional recommendations have included improving the way that community benefits are defined, measured, and tracked. The

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pg. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg. 6.

<sup>6</sup> The Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Group, established under Senate Bill 350 (De León, Chapter 547, Statutes of 2015), consults with and advises the CEC and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in determining how programs can be more effective and beneficial for disadvantaged and other communities. Ibid., pg. 6.

IDEAL Project supported this effort through launching community listening sessions and direct engagement to better understand communities' needs, barriers, and priorities.

These listening sessions and their overarching goal of increasing public participation and engagement in, as well as community benefits from, California's clean transportation investments, aligned with similar efforts undertaken by CARB. Other CTP activities, including IDEAL, support CARB's required goal of statewide GHG emissions reductions under Assembly Bill 32 (Núñez, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006), also known as the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, which "required CARB to adopt a statewide GHG emission limit for 2020 equivalent to the statewide GHG emission levels in 1990."<sup>7</sup> This statutory target was updated in November 2022 by CARB and further clarified the state's 2030 emissions reduction target and the path to carbon neutrality by 2045.

Achieving these goals requires broad community support and buy-in, which can be achieved only through meaningful and sustained engagement efforts by state agencies. Taken together, the efforts made through the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project helped bring the CEC, and aligned efforts from other agencies, such as CARB, closer to reaching their shared goals and vision of a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible, and local clean transportation system for all Californians.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pg. 29.

## CHAPTER 2:

# Clean Transportation Program Assessment

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A primary task of the project was to assess the Clean Transportation Program (CTP). The CTP Assessment sought to gather input on the public perceptions of the CTP as well as to identify opportunities for enhanced engagement, benefit, and impact from program investments, especially for underserved or under-resourced communities or both.

In planning the CTP Assessment, the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) used the following focus areas to guide the research process:

1. The landscape of CTP investments to-date
2. The engagement and level of familiarity with the CTP across regions and interest areas
3. The needs and barriers of communities including technical assistance
4. The capacity and ability of the CTP to address community needs and barriers
5. The strengths and resources of communities
6. The capacity and ability of the CTP to recognize and support community strengths and resources

The first component of the CTP Assessment focused on analyzing the geographic distribution of awardees and applicants of 10 project types (allocation categories) of the CTP from the March 17, 2008 to March 17, 2021.

The eight project types were:<sup>8</sup>

1. Light-Duty Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Deployment.
2. Manufacturing.
3. Medium- and Heavy- Duty Advanced Vehicle Technology Demonstration.
4. Medium- and Heavy- Duty ZEV Deployment.
5. Regional Alternative Fuel Readiness and Planning.
6. Renewable Hydrogen Production.
7. Technical Assistance.
8. Workforce Development and Training.

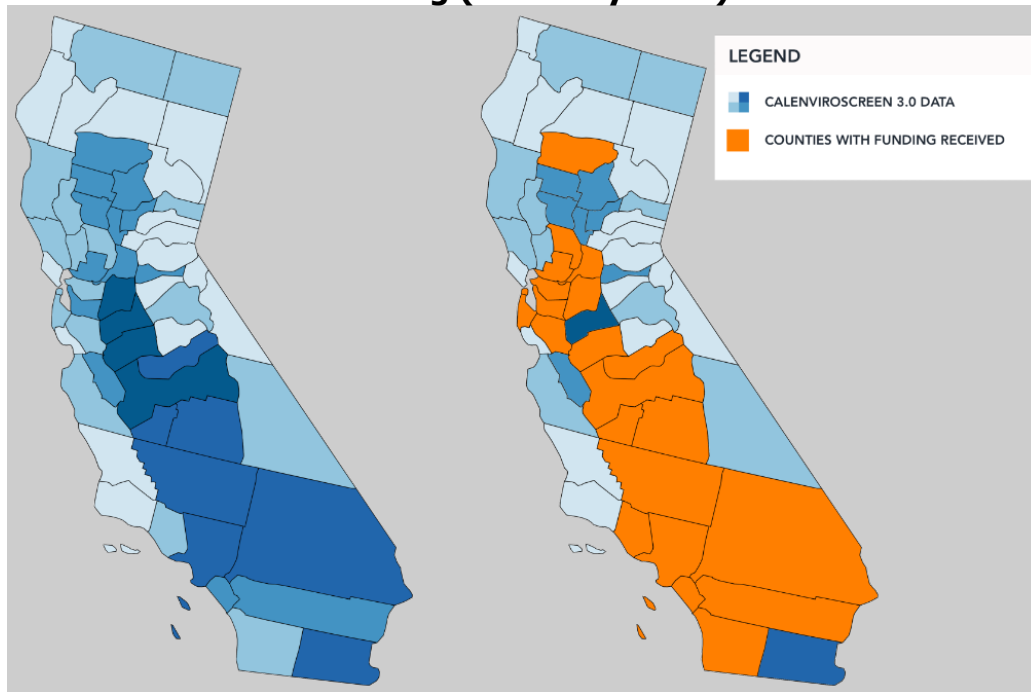
Locations for these awardees and applicants were mapped with data from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment's screening tool CalEnviroScreen 3.0 (CES 3.0) to identify geographic areas where there was both a lack of CTP funding as well as the presence

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<sup>8</sup> Tuggy, Benjamin. 2024. *2023–2024 Investment Plan Update for the Clean Transportation Program*. California Energy Commission. Publication Number: CEC-600-2023-029-CMF. (pg. 12).

of one or more disadvantaged communities.<sup>9</sup> The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) was directed to define disadvantaged communities by Senate Bill (SB) 535 (De León, Chapter 830, Statutes of 2012). CalEPA defined disadvantaged communities as those census tracts whose CES 3.0 scores were in the seventy-fifth percentile or higher.

**Figure 1: Map of California Counties by Density of CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Disadvantaged Communities and Recipients of Clean Transportation Program Funding (as of July 2021)**



**Map shows the distribution of funding received by county and the density of disadvantaged communities by county according to CalEnviroScreen 3.0 data with the darker blue shades representing a higher density of disadvantaged communities.**

Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0 and Clean Transportation Program funding data.

The FoundationCCC also created and administered a community interest survey, in English and Spanish, to organizations who had formerly applied for CTP funding. The foundation sent the survey to 77 organizations, including awardees of CTP funding as well as those who were not awarded funds (non-CTP awardees) and collected 10 responses. Seven of the 10 respondents stated that they had not received technical assistance for the preparation of their application. Other issues were revealed, including minimum thresholds for major subcontractors, complex accounting requirements, and the pressures of a first-come-first-served model. Some of these issues have since been addressed by the "Streamlining Grant Terms and Conditions" document approved by the CEC on October 18, 2021.

In addition to a mapping analysis and a community interest survey, the CTP Assessment included stakeholder interviews with community-based organizations (CBOs) and Advanced

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<sup>9</sup> California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. "[CalEnviroScreen 3.0](https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-30)," [CalEnviroScreen 3.0 - OEHHA](https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-30) <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-30>. (The project used the most recent data available at the time of the analysis which was from CES 3.0. During the project period, CES 4.0 was released, and the project used these updated data for subsequent analysis and project activities).



Transportation Logistics (ATL)<sup>10</sup> program staff to gather feedback on community perceptions and workforce development, respectively. The FoundationCCC sent interview invitations to staff from 33 CBOs and 12 workforce development experts. Twenty-two interviews were conducted by FoundationCCC staff, a response rate near 50 percent.

Based on the findings from the mapping analysis, community interest survey, and the stakeholder interviews, the following needs and priorities were identified:

1. Increased flexibility for CBOs during the solicitation and application processes.
  - a. Respondents expressed a need for more flexibility in how CTP announces funding opportunities, as well as in the application process. One recurring theme was the timeline for core application processes, like the amount of time between the opening and closing of the application, as well as opportunities for questions and answers.
  - b. Examples: preapplication announcements, longer application windows, more opportunities for questions, estimated time to complete the application.
2. Dedicated, or set-aside, funding for communities that the CTP wants to prioritize.
  - a. Respondents recognized the need for dedicated or set-aside funding or both to counteract the feedback loop present in “status-quo” funding practices that leads to more experienced, more funded groups receiving even more experience and funding, further perpetuating the cycle.
  - b. Example: restricting eligibility for specific funding opportunities, entirely or at least 50 percent, to applicants representing priority areas and groups, such as tribal governments and community-based organizations.
3. Technical assistance that matches the needs of applicants/stakeholders in prioritized communities.
  - a. Respondents expressed the need to prioritize the specific needs of their communities as they relate to resources provided, especially technical assistance. Iterative program design and multiple funding windows in projects and programs would enable CTP to adjust these resources based on feedback gathered in each funding window or cycle.
  - b. Example: support with permitting requirements in communities lacking streamlined permitting with their local or regional government(s) or both.

The strategies and activities in the outreach and engagement plan should be supported through the adoption of these recommendations to ensure that the intended communities have access to the necessary resources for applying to and receiving funds, successfully implementing projects, and accruing direct benefits from CTP investment opportunities. The full assessment can be found in Attachment I: Final Consultant Report — Task Two — Clean Transportation Assessment.

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<sup>10</sup> [Advanced Transportation Logistics](https://atleducation.org/): <https://atleducation.org/>.

# **CHAPTER 3:**

## **Outreach and Engagement to Support Clean Transportation in IDEAL Communities**

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### **Creating an Outreach and Engagement Plan**

After completing the CTP Assessment, the project team drafted the outreach and engagement plan<sup>11</sup> to synthesize research findings, best practices on equitable community engagement, and the broader goals of IDEAL and the CTP. The outreach and engagement plan was essential to the project, and the plan development guided subsequent project activities.

Through drafting the outreach and engagement plan, the IDEAL project:

- Created a working definition of an “IDEAL community,” as well as a framework to identify such communities across California.
- Summarized best practices for effective communication with diverse audiences, including an overview of stakeholder groups that may be engaged in outreach for clean transportation investments.
- Launched strategies for community outreach and engagement that had not been previously implemented by CTP.
- Fostered new relationships between the CTP and community-based organizations.
- Identified goals, outcomes, and measures of success for outreach and engagement activities that can be undertaken by the IDEAL project or the CTP or both.

Taken together, the outreach and engagement plan sought to advance the awareness, engagement, and beneficiaries of CTP investments in those communities that are recognized as being disproportionately impacted by environmental, social, and economic harms or who have not experienced a proportionate level of benefit from CTP investments in the past or both. The plan also assessed disbenefits or harms or both that could accrue to communities from investments, such as the dispossession of land through long-term lease contracts for EV charging infrastructure, especially high-kilowatt charging. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the potential risk of displacement from investments that increase property value. The full outreach and engagement plan can be found in Attachment II: Final Consultant Report — Task Three — Outreach and Engagement Plan.

### **Expanding Networks through Collaboration and Partnerships**

IDEAL project staff at the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) employed a “snowball” or cumulative approach/methodology of outreach and engagement by leveraging existing partner networks to foster new relationships with community partners across the state. For example, FoundationCCC worked with the non-profit organization GRID Alternatives to create synergy for CTP activities. IDEAL worked with GRID Alternatives to

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<sup>11</sup> Attachment II.

promote several cross-cutting projects, including the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Access Clean California, the CEC's Communities in Charge light-duty EV charging incentive project, and the California Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project (CALeVIP).

Throughout the project period, hundreds of people were engaged, representing a diverse range of groups, like community-based organizations, government officials, students, college staff and faculty, business owners, community leaders, and California's Native American tribes and representatives. Some of these engagements grew into deeper relationships, and some have developed into genuine and reciprocal partnerships.

## **Supporting the Draft Community Benefits Framework Initiative**

The project supported the CTP Draft Community Benefits Framework initiative through the design and organization of community-led listening sessions, as well as an assessment of community benefits and potential metrics and means of assessing progress on achieving benefits. The initiative to track community benefits was "kickstarted" with the Clean Transportation Program Community Benefits Framework Workshop, held remotely via Zoom on November 29, 2022.<sup>12</sup>

The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project shared resources and information about the initiative and the November 29 workshop with more than 200 community-based organizations (CBOs), local business, local governments, community college faculty and staff, and nonprofit organizations. Following that workshop, the project worked with the CTP to plan a follow-up workshop to sustain momentum for the initiative. During this time, the project implemented a community-led model for hosting listening sessions and gathering critical feedback from community members.

The IDEAL project organized three community listening sessions. Two of the sessions were in-person, and one was virtual. In each case, a CBO hosted the listening session with support from IDEAL. Project staff met with each CBO host several times before each listening session to ensure that the CBO felt supported and comfortable with hosting the session. CBO staff was provided with the facilitation guide and conducted their sessions.

The first in-person session was hosted by Making Hope Happen Foundation and Uplift San Bernardino at the Akoma Unity Center in San Bernardino. Community residents were invited to Akoma Unity Center to participate in a focus group-style activity led by staff from Uplift San Bernardino. Through an innovative partnership between Making Hope Happen Foundation and its community partners, childcare was provided to participants by university students through a service-learning model, with licensed supervision. This support was critical in enabling participants to fully engage with the activity regardless of their family status.

Mujeres Empresarias Tomando Accion (META) hosted the second session at a community center in San Jose, CA. META is a women-led CBO that serves Spanish-speaking communities in the East San Jose area. META hosted the in-person session using a translated version of a facilitation guide created by the FoundationCCC project team. This translated guide enabled

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12 California Energy Commission. "[Clean Transportation Program Community Benefits](https://www.energy.ca.gov/proceeding/clean-transportation-program-community-benefits)," <https://www.energy.ca.gov/proceeding/clean-transportation-program-community-benefits>.

the project to collect more diverse and representative feedback by supporting groups with different linguistic needs.

Lastly, a virtual session was held that focused on organizational-level feedback. This session was cohosted with Uplift San Bernardino and included organizations from across the state. The project team used a modified version of the facilitation guide that tailored questions to the perspective of an organization that represents community members. Some of the attendees of this session had attended the IDEAL Communities Forum, while others had no prior engagement with the IDEAL project.

The IDEAL project and CTP staff was present, virtually, at the beginning of each session but was not present for the feedback and engagement portions of the sessions. This model was chosen to foster greater trust with community members who attended the listening session. It also provided support to CBOs and established trust with the CEC, more generally.

## **Other Community Feedback Opportunities**

The IDEAL project attended other community engagement activities, including focus groups led by other nonprofit partners and the funding workshops of the CEC and CARB. Project staff also attended engagements held by other CEC programs, including EnergIZE, CALeVIP, and Communities in Charge.

During the project period, the FoundationCCC organized a listening session on transportation equity and mobility justice for the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).<sup>13</sup> The aim was to bring together a range of voices and experiential wisdom that could help the CEQ make community-driven decisions related to the historic infrastructure funding that was enacted during the project period. Organizations and community leaders engaged throughout the IDEAL project were invited to attend the listening session with the White House CEQ. Feedback from this opportunity was included in the broader feedback summary of the project.

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13 Zoom. "[Community Connections: Transportation and Mobility Justice](https://zoom.us/rec/play/FMeymIPOSqXLmiFZEGfqvKqi4ndo0C2B3g6zu_0xk-A44RHc8wiPF37tbopoBP5-rkkZ86x-w6zbKE89.625NeZbqMnA-Vgrn?)," [https://zoom.us/rec/play/FMeymIPOSqXLmiFZEGfqvKqi4ndo0C2B3g6zu\\_0xk-A44RHc8wiPF37tbopoBP5-rkkZ86x-w6zbKE89.625NeZbqMnA-Vgrn?](https://zoom.us/rec/play/FMeymIPOSqXLmiFZEGfqvKqi4ndo0C2B3g6zu_0xk-A44RHc8wiPF37tbopoBP5-rkkZ86x-w6zbKE89.625NeZbqMnA-Vgrn?)

# CHAPTER 4:

## ZEV IDEAL Student Ambassadors

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The IDEAL Communities Partnership Project was strengthened by the addition of the ZEV IDEAL Student Ambassador Pilot Program. This pilot program presented a dynamic opportunity for California community college students to contribute to the advancement of statewide and regional environmental and clean transportation equity while gaining real world and professional experience in outreach and advocacy.

With direction from IDEAL project staff, the IDEAL Student Ambassadors:

- Served as community liaisons
- Provided lived experience and representation of their respective communities
- Raised awareness of California's ZEV policies
- Increased the visibility of the CEC's Clean Transportation Program for their peers, college faculty and staff, and residents of their communities

IDEAL Student Ambassadors also worked to solicit community feedback and served as the voices of their communities about areas of priority for CEC investment through a community interest survey and discussions with government officials, community-based organizations, community members, businesses, employers, and other stakeholders. Together, these activities provided valuable insight on how the CEC and CTP can improve the communication of their investments and how those investments can benefit households, neighborhoods, the environment, and local economies.

The goals for the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassadors were to:

1. Serve as community liaisons to raise awareness about the CEC and CTP.
2. Educate students, faculty, and local community members about the CTP and how funding under the CTP can benefit local households, neighborhoods, and the environment.
3. Work with FoundationCCC program manager to create community profiles within the specified five regions of the ambassador cohort (listed in the next section).
4. Gather community feedback about areas of priority for CEC investment through a community interest survey.
5. Serve as the voice of your communities through discussions with government officials, community-based organizations, community members, and other stakeholders.

### Recruitment

The foundation conducted outreach and recruitment for the selection of eight IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassadors. Outreach was conducted with 49 community colleges, including more than 100 student clubs and 250 faculty representing science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), including environmental science, the social sciences, public health, and automotive-related curricula. Recruitment began in late August/early September 2021

with an application deadline date of September 19. Applications were processed, and ambassadors were selected in late September and notified in early October 2021.

In total, 26 students applied to the opportunity, representing 13 colleges with geographic representation across the state. Students were asked to respond to three open-ended questions that were scored as part of a holistic evaluation of applications. Names were withheld when scoring applications.

The top scoring students from each school were invited to participate in phone interviews. Responses to the questions, which are shown below, were evaluated, and total scores were given to each student applicant. The top scoring students from each college were then selected with the additional consideration of local Clean Transportation Program funding in the student's community. It was reasoned that having a CTP-funded project in their local community would yield more insights when conducting community interest surveys, allowing for the evaluation of current knowledge of the program and related projects.

### Phone Interview Questions

- Where are you calling in from?
- How long have you lived there?
- Describe your connection to the community in which you live.
- What drove you to attend community college?
- What was the community issue that you identified? *(prior to the interview, students were asked to think of an important issue affecting their community)*
  - Who are the stakeholders?
  - How are those stakeholders affected by the issue?
  - Are different stakeholders affected in different ways by the issue? How so?
- When you think about the environment and human's relationship to the environment, what comes to mind?

The recruitment process employed diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices, which yielded a highly diverse group of students. The inaugural cohort was composed of eight students from six community colleges with representation in each of the five regions of focus of the program. The regions and colleges represented were as follows:

Region	College
Imperial Valley	Imperial Valley College
Inland Empire	Mt. San Jacinto College
San Joaquin Valley	Bakersfield College
Central Coast	Hartnell College; Cabrillo College
Far North	Yuba College

These students all grew up in the communities in which their school is located. With these deep roots, the students demonstrated a passion for improving their communities and bringing home the benefits of ZEVs and clean transportation. Throughout the 2021–2022 academic year, student ambassadors conducted peer-to-peer and community outreach and engagement to increase clean transportation awareness, identified environmental and socioeconomic benefits, and solicited feedback about community priorities. IDEAL Student Ambassadors received an outreach toolkit and budget to assist with their outreach and a stipend of \$1,500 for their participation.

## **Onboarding, Training, and Outreach**

The IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassadors were onboarded<sup>14</sup> and trained by foundation for California staff and experts from the CEC’s Clean Transportation Program. Training included topics such as clean mobility/transportation, Climate Change 101, environmental justice and equity, workforce, and outreach and engagement strategies. Research plans were also made for the student ambassadors to guide the planning of related but distinct outreach and engagement activities for each of the eight communities represented. Students began researching demographics, labor trends, ZEV infrastructure dispersion, pollution burdens, and stakeholder networks of their respective communities.

The project team developed research guides to help the students complete high-quality analysis. In addition, various tools were used in this research, including CalEnviroScreen 4.0 to help students construct their initial narratives and community profiles. Paired with the students’ familiarity and connection with their communities, their findings provided novel insights. This research also served to strengthen the students’ understanding of and comfortability with CTP goals and funding opportunities.

The ambassadorship began with a welcome session October 20, 2021, where students introduced themselves to the cohort. This initial session also provided an overview of the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project, along with a general timeline for program activities. Subsequent training sessions were held November 18 and 19 and covered topics related to environmental justice and equity followed by an outreach training session November 29. These training sessions provided a foundation for the students as they engaged with their peers and local communities on CTP activities. Throughout the remainder of the ambassadorship, the cohort continued to meet monthly as a group over Zoom and engaged with their fellow ambassadors on community profiles, outreach strategies, and forum presentation ideas.

Once a month, students were also asked to schedule 30-minute check-ins through Calendly (free online appointment scheduling software) with IDEAL staff to provide updates on progress and go over any questions they might have. These check-ins also allowed deeper relationship building and provided students with the space to talk through ideas and questions, as well as set goals and reflect on program milestones.

Program communication also took place in the form of weekly newsletters, which were sent to the ambassadors every Friday via Campaign Monitor, an email marketing platform. These

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<sup>14</sup> Onboard (someone): Formally integrate a new person into a role, organization, or system, usually through a structured process.

newsletters included program updates, action items, upcoming meetings/events, as well as additional learning materials and resources.

As part of their onboarding and training, students were asked to complete community profiles for which they used various tools such as CalEnviroScreen 4.0, the U.S. Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels Data Center, and the U.S. Census Bureau. These profiles summarized the key community characteristics relevant to the CTP and associated funding opportunities, including an assessment of current ZEV infrastructure needs and opportunities for future investment.

The IDEAL team also created an outreach toolkit to provide students with clean transportation-related outreach materials as well as stakeholder-specific email templates. To track their progress, students used an ambassador outreach action plan. The contractor also supported the student ambassadors as they worked on their own flash talk presentations for the IDEAL Community Forum.

The following activities were completed to support the goal of piloting the IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassador Program:

- Recruiting, training, and onboarding of the student ambassadors
  - Recruited students using diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) best practices.
  - Created training and onboarding materials for students.
- Distribution of informational materials to local government officials and local business owners, especially regarding funding opportunities for ZEV fleets and related infrastructure
  - Creation of email templates for the students to use in their outreach to community stakeholders, with different messaging for each stakeholder group
  - Supported student ambassadors in distribution of materials to their campus communities, including facilities staff
- Student presentations that serve as "community profiles," which document ZEV infrastructure needs, public perceptions, and other relevant information for the communities represented by the ambassadors.



# CHAPTER 5:

## IDEAL Communities Forum

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The IDEAL Communities Forum was a two-and-a-half-hour-long capstone event, which took place August 3, 2022. Because of ongoing concerns surrounding public health and the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team chose to hold the event virtually over Zoom, as opposed to potential hybrid plans that were initially proposed. The forum was organized to showcase the work of the student ambassadors, as well as convene key stakeholders in the California ZEV landscape to discuss progress made and priorities for future CTP efforts.

The forum focused on highlighting lessons from the ZEV Student Ambassador Program, as well as experiences of CBOs reached by the project. Stakeholders that attended the Forum included CBOs from across the state, the IDEAL ZEV student ambassadors, local business owners, municipal government staff, community college staff and faculty, CEC and CTP staff, FoundationCCC staff, community leaders, and staff from other state agencies, including the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Expected outcomes from the forum included the coordination of new partners and sparking of new collaborations. The forum brought together stakeholders who had not engaged in the past. Moreover, the forum also served to expand awareness of community-identified issues for state agency staff, as well as enhance community members and CBO's understanding of state agency activities. The project team ensured that the forum was not a dead-end meeting but rather would yield feedback that could be acted upon and produce other actionable next steps.

Goals and expectations for the forum included:

1. Sharing updates from the Clean Transportation Program and the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project.
2. Hearing from community groups regarding local mobility needs, challenges, and opportunities.
3. Holding space for open, honest dialogue on mobility justice issues. For example, participants raised concerns about neighborhoods lacking safe pedestrian infrastructure or reliable public transit options, which limits access to essential services and opportunities.
4. Highlighting opportunities for interagency and interprogram coordination and collaboration.
5. Fostering new connections and kickstarting future collaboration on zero-emission mobility and transportation equity issues.

### Forum Planning and Outreach

In the months leading up to the IDEAL Communities Forum, the IDEAL team engaged in thoughtful planning and participation outreach. The team sought to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders from around the state in an inclusive and accessible environment in which to share and engage on their transportation and mobility needs.

### Planning and Logistics

To help ensure that the virtual event would run smoothly, the contractor consulted with event planning experts to support the convening. Specifically, the IDEAL team worked collaboratively with colleagues in the Conferences and Events Department at the foundation to help provide any technological and logistical support before, during, and after the forum. This team spearheaded pre-event setup, including meeting with presenters ahead of time to check mics, test tech, and so forth. Team members also ran the presentation slide deck during the entirety of the event and were there to assist any attendee with technical assistance during the presentation. Following the event, this team edited and created recordings in Vimeo in an English version and one with Spanish subtitles.

In addition to technical support, the IDEAL team secured contracts with a language interpretation service to further ensure that the virtual event would be as accessible as possible. Translation and interpretation support was provided to ensure the event was inclusive and accessible. Attendees were asked before the event if they required language support services. Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL) support was requested, along with closed captioning.

Administratively, event coordination and logistical planning happened through various platforms including Airtable for project management, Campaign Monitor for communications such as newsletters and invitations/reminders, Google Drive for program documentation, and email outreach.

The IDEAL team worked in coordination with the office of (former) CEC Commissioner Patty Monahan to coordinate her availability in picking a date and time for the forum, as well as to ensure her capacity to provide opening remarks for the event.

In the months and weeks leading up to the forum, the contractor also worked closely with the student ambassadors on their flash talk presentations and ensured they were comfortable with speaking in front of the group and being the voice for their communities. Students understood that their presentations at the forum were the culmination of their ambassadorships and served to illustrate what they had learned as IDEAL ambassadors, how they see their own communities and provided opportunities for meaningful dialogue and feedback with event attendees.

## **Outreach and Recruitment**

In early July 2022, the contractor created and distributed a save-the-date newsletter reminder in Campaign Monitor to share with its target network. This save the date or invitation to participate in the event was sent to more than 70 identified stakeholders from around the state. These stakeholders were partially identified through the work of the student ambassadors in their communities.

The email invitation also provided the opportunity for stakeholders to learn more about the forum and ways that they could participate by joining an optional informational session with IDEAL staff. Five dates and times were provided along with a Zoom registration link. The IDEAL team subsequently met with several stakeholders via these sessions and worked with them to develop their “flash talk” presentations for the forum. Moreover, the IDEAL team dedicated time to reach out to CBOs who might be interested in sharing their community’s mobility needs and challenges directly with the CEC during the forum and worked closely with them to develop short “flash talks.”

During the registration process via the Zoom link, participants were asked to disclose any accommodations that would help make the event more accessible for them and their community members. In keeping with the goals and objectives of an equity first program, the IDEAL project was able to offer participation stipends for CBOs and other stakeholders who attended the event and additional stipend opportunities for those who gave flash talk presentations. In doing this, the project team wanted to be sure to acknowledge the time and energy of these participants and presenters and compensate them for their contributions.

## **Forum Recap — Event Summary August 3, 2022**

The forum began with goals and expectations for the event. The project team intended the agenda to share updates on the CTP and the IDEAL project, as well as hear directly from the student ambassadors and community groups regarding local mobility needs, challenges, and opportunities. The forum also aimed to create a respectful, inclusive environment where participants felt comfortable engaging in open and honest dialogue about mobility justice issues. In doing so, it sought to foster new connections and build future collaborations on zero-emission mobility and transportation equity.

Attendees were greeted by (former) CEC Commissioner Patty Monahan, who provided opening remarks. The commissioner touched on the requests and need to identify the distinct mobility needs of local communities and how state dollars can be leveraged to meet those needs. She highlighted how difficult it can be to get charging infrastructure in rural communities and how the political will of local CBOs is often the catalyst for such progress. She recognized the need to listen directly to communities' needs and to support their unique goals. She also highlighted the distinct state goals and budget funding for ZEVs, noting that while money is allocated to CTP, the state needs input on how to get it to communities.

## **IDEAL ZEV Student Ambassadors Presentation Summary**

The forum highlighted the work and insights of six IDEAL student ambassadors, each representing their unique location in California and their respective community college. Each student gave brief 3- to 5-minute "flash talks" introducing themselves and their communities and highlighting different barriers and opportunities for growth that they see as a member of this unique community.

### **Cori Scott**

Cori is a resident of Hemet (Riverside County) and is a student at Mt. San Jacinto College majoring in sociology and psychology. While serving as an ambassador in the IDEAL program, Cori was able to learn more about environmental challenges, mobility, and transportation needs in her community. She was able to see what aspects of the community are neglected, and what aspects demand resources in terms of environmental issues. Hemet is a small city and family community with a population of around 90,000. Much of this population relies on foot or bike transportation, although conditions for these forms of mobility are not ideal and thus discourages folks from doing so. Roadways are littered with trash and debris as well as drug paraphernalia.

Cori illustrated her CalEnviroScreen 4.0 findings that the higher traffic center of town is dark orange, or in the highest percentile, compared to neighboring cities that are yellow and green. Cori learned that Hemet only has 13 alternative fueling station locations within 10 miles of the high traffic area of her city in comparison with neighboring Temecula which has 4 times as

many chargers in a 10 mile distance, and with a similar population. She sees this disconnect as a discouragement for people in her community to switch to or access cleaner transportation. She believes access to charging stations would increase EV transition and usage in her community. The current charging locations are at Walmart and city owned buildings and are not spread out.

Cori acknowledges the population of Hemet is growing and the demographics are widening, creating greater need for transportation options in this community. To maintain adequate transportation options in a low-income community like Hemet, the environmental needs of community members must be met. One current option is the highly-used Riverside Transit agency. Cori concludes that if transportation options were to expand in her community, she believes the environmental benefits would also expand into economic and social opportunities for Hemet.

### **Michelle Villapudua**

Michelle is a resident of Salinas (Monterey County) and was a student at Hartnell College in Salinas, where she studied public health. Michelle was honest about her initial motivations to join the ambassadorship program and was intrigued by the stipend payment for the program. While money was a motivating factor, she quickly grew to learn more and became more aware of the importance of ZEVs, but realized they were not easily accessible for everyone, especially folks in her community.

Michelle highlighted the mobility and transportation needs of her community and what she learned as she began conducting her research. She noticed that many bus stops in her part of the city did not offer benches for folks to wait for the bus. She learned on a phone call with the Monterey Salinas Transit that they only offer one electric bus in all of their fleet, which was a bit shocking to her. Michelle also highlighted the charging infrastructure in Salinas and pointed out that there are only 17 charging stations, none of which are located on her side of town, east Salinas. She believes that if there was greater access to charging stations in her city then this would help with the goal of getting more EVs on the road.

### **Chandler Jenkins**

Chandler is a resident of Visalia (Tulare County) and is a student at Cabrillo College in Aptos, where he studies engineering. During his ambassadorship, Chandler was able to access and use a variety of resources and tools that allowed him to become more knowledgeable about ZEVs and transportation resources in his city and state. Chandler learned more about Visalia and Tulare County's current charging infrastructure and electric city bus fleets along with hybrid/electric bus programs for local school districts.

Chandler used CalEnviroScreen 4.0 to highlight the effects that drought, agriculture, and industrialization have had on Visalia and Tulare County. He was able to locate 94 alternative fueling stations within 25 miles of Visalia. Chandler acknowledges his community is slowly transitioning and becoming more aware of transportation resources and ZEVs, and that local governments and school districts can greatly benefit from making these transitions.

### **Tatum McLanahan**

Tatum is a resident of Chico (Butte County) and attends/attended Yuba and Butte College pursuing a degree in environmental science with an emphasis on energy and earth, which stems from the research and work from this ambassadorship. She has become more aware of

the transportation needs of her community. Tatum highlighted a survey conducted in Chico that showed the preferred method of transportation with 50 percent stating that they preferred using their personal vehicle to move around, followed by equal split for walking and bicycling. The results of this survey prompted Tatum to dive deeper into the efforts being made to find more sustainable methods of transportation for her community.

Butte Regional Transit is the most common and provides local transit within and to surrounding towns in Butte County. The main obstacle to this method is the lack of scheduled routes, and more buses/routes are needed to allow more accessibility. Transitioning these buses to electric buses would be a step forward in sustainable transportation in Chico. With the lack of accessibility, she sees people often turn to Ubers for reliable transportation. She emphasizes the progress that could be made if taxi fleets were able to transition their fleets to EVs. Tatum includes a graphic of Chico's bike map but states that she doesn't see biking used as a mode of transportation very often within her city.

The issues she has seen raised about biking in her community include accessibility, vandalism, safety, and theft. She offers the adoption of solar-battery scooters as an alternative and sustainable option for the mobility needs within Chico. Also, providing bike locking centers and incorporating more lighting for walking paths would increase safety for these modes of transportation.

### **Samantha Serna**

Samantha is a resident of Cherry Valley (Riverside County) and attended Mt. San Jacinto College. Samantha is transferring to UC Davis as a chemistry major. Samantha highlighted the different tools used, such as CalEnviroScreen 4.0 to learn about the burdens that come with living in a rural area. She used the neighboring town of Beaumont as an example and showed that it falls within the higher percentiles for CalEnviroScreen 4.0 and Pollution Burden, making this population very vulnerable to sources of pollution and related effects.

Samantha sees several concerns of her community, including greater sidewalk and bus accessibility, better support from local officials, and reliable transportation to and from Cabazon. She explains that many residents commute long distances for work and need greater access to reliable transportation options, especially because of economic and poverty factors in these areas. Cabazon brings a lot of tourism and employs many low-wage workers. However, many employees have trouble getting to work because of limited transportation options. Many would benefit from incorporating a trainline or more frequent bus line options or both.

### **Jack Salceda**

Jack is a resident of Westmorland (Imperial County) in Imperial Valley. He is an engineering major at Imperial Valley College. Westmorland is an agricultural community culturally and economically. Because of this, the area has chosen to invest its infrastructure funding toward agriculture. It is very important for the area to be able to obtain and retain its water rights over investing in clean electricity. The community must choose to prioritize water over clean energy because of limited funding for infrastructure. This is where Jack sees the environmental inequality in his community stem from. Jack discovered that there are only six charging stations in Imperial County, two of which were recently added since he joined the ambassadorship. His county is also one of the few counties in the state that has not started taking steps towards a zero-emission public bus transit system. He has learned and been able

to share public funding opportunities that the CEC is offering to communities to develop ZEV infrastructure.

## **Community Presentations**

The forum also featured several “flash talks” from CBOs from across the state who spoke to the unique mobility challenges, needs, and opportunities in their respective communities.

### **Self-Help Enterprises**

Nonprofit in Visalia, Tulare County

Presenter: Maria Dolores Reveles

Self-Help Enterprises (S.H.E.) works to address various community needs, such as housing and technical assistance for communities impacted by drought or contaminated water.

Maria is with the sustainable energy solutions team working on anything related to energy. Team members focus on energy burdens that small, disadvantaged communities are bearing. One strategy that they employ is a community-facing focus — they don’t want to just go into a community and say this is what’s best for them. Instead, they go in and usually start with a community listening session or meetings to listen and present information like the CalEnviroScreen data. Team members make proposals based on what they know about the community. Then the team listens and sees what questions or misconceptions community members may have.

Once a need in the community is identified, team members provide presentations or information on certain topics. They have held electric vehicle presentations for different communities; how they work, how you charge them, cost of charging, maintenance fees, etc. Once they listen to the needs of the community members they try to give any and all information to help them make adopting clean transportation easier for them. They definitely want to know what barriers are out there.

### **Comite Civico del Valle**

Nonprofit organization in Brawley, Imperial County

Presenter: Janira Figueroa

Comite is an environmental and social justice group that speaks to the needs of its community. Group members shared that EV infrastructure is lacking in their community, with only six chargers and three of these being Tesla. They see a need for more charging stations, as well as incentive programs and public transportation. They have no current electric buses in transit.

Communities need education and engagement to get them involved

Challenges — lowest per capita chargers in the entire state. Low-income communities and significant financial hardships.

Opportunities — Lithium Valley, First 40 Initiative, bottom up approach on equity

### **Casa Familiar**

Nonprofit in San Ysidro, San Diego County

San Ysidro has one of the largest and busiest border crossings in the world, which results in negative impacts on neighboring communities with pollution, traffic, and poor air quality. One big challenge it has is a lack of EV charging infrastructure. Casa Familiar identified opportunities to install better infrastructure to reduce border crossing congestion, thereby improving air quality. The nonprofit hopes to create a San Ysidro Transit station with EV stations, pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, carshare options.

## **The East Oakland Collective**

Nonprofit in Oakland, Alameda County

Presenters: Dani Dynes and Citlalli Herrera

East Oakland Collective is a CBO that helps residents navigate challenges and barriers to inequities through resource distribution and advocacy. It aims to work toward racial and economic justice and equitable access. Its work includes economic empowerment, homeless services, and solutions and community action. Through community planning, it seeks to create healthier neighborhoods with safer streets, cleaner air, more access to green spaces, and outdoor recreational programs. Their communities are diverse, historically predominately Hispanic and Black with higher population of children under the age of 5 than surrounding areas. They face severe health impacts from poor outdoor air quality, which is exacerbated by heavy industrial land uses and residents who drive alone because of the inadequate public transportation options.

Challenges in East Oakland include poor air quality and other environmental justice issues, low-income communities, disinvestment leading to weak infrastructure and residents' mistrust of officials, as well as displacement of longtime residents. The East Oakland Collective, a community-based organization, believes it can improve the quality of life and the environment by providing more affordable clean transportation options here. They approach their work through the lens of mobility justice with a focus on engaging the most disadvantaged people in the community, identifying and dismantling structural barriers to mobility for low-income residents and communities of color, and placing people over profit in decision-making.

The collective focuses on providing mobility justice for people of color, women, people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, seniors, children, single parents, and people who cannot drive or do not own a car. These are the groups who have historically carried the burden of transportation impacts and have not received benefits of transportation infrastructure and urban development.

As part of this work, the Collective has focused on improving access to Martin Luther King shoreline. By hosting activities like bike riding, kayaking, birdwatching, and kite flying, they have engaged residents in shaping how they would like to access and enjoy the shoreline.

Several ways they believe they can use support from the CEC include support for the ports and their land use, transitioning to renewable resources for commercial vehicles and properties, installing more EV infrastructure along business and commercial corridors, and adopting more incentives that will reach more low-income families and support more multimodal options such as public transit, biking, and walking. The commission has the power to transform these communities by investing in education for youth who will be critical to the green economy.

## **Community Services Unlimited**

Nonprofit in South Central Los Angeles

Presenter: Jasmin Garcia

Community Services Unlimited's programs work to create a sustainable local food system through urban farming, food justice and sustainability-focused training and educational programs, economic development, and connecting community residents to resources. The nonprofit's headquarters houses its community food hub and includes an organic grocery



market, café, and commercial kitchen, which is powered in part by solar energy and includes an EV charging station for community members to use. Both installed using state-funded rebate programs. This is a low-income community with predominantly Black and Latino residents and is being greatly impacted by gentrification.

One of Jasmin's responsibilities is to help people identify programs and rebates from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power that can help them conserve resources and save money. This work includes the rebate for EV vehicles and chargers. Some of the issues surrounding EV vehicles and infrastructure that they've heard from the community when conducting their outreach include the following:

- EV charging and vehicles are seen as a sign of gentrification and displacement for community members because they're not seen as centering the needs of low-income residents. They are seen as displacement instead of investment.
- Rebates require complicated applications that many community members find confusing, aren't comfortable with internet or don't have email, language barriers. Community members need easily accessible resources in preferred languages. Rebates also ignore the economic realities of many Los Angeles residents who don't have the additional incomes for the upfront costs to purchase EVs and installing chargers.
- The lack of visibility of chargers is a problem in this community because in many cases you can drive right by them and not even know they are there. When it comes to chargers, there is a lack of investment. They are not properly maintained and are often not working. They want to know how to make EV chargers as visible as gas stations so that they are accessible to everyone.

She shared her personal experience of receiving a grant to purchase a refrigerated vehicle from the Cal Department of Food and Agriculture. She was encouraged to purchase an EV and did research to find a manufacturer and raised additional funding. She was awarded an Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Program (HVIP )voucher but found out later that her grant could not be combined with HVIP voucher, so she ultimately had to decline the voucher and return the funds.

This experience would have been an opportunity to support a highly visible EV project in their underserved community, but the opportunity was lost because of regulatory changes that did not consider the needs of small community players like them. These technologies are vital for the community to improve air quality, conserve resources, and help them adapt to climate change. But as long as EV purchasing, charging infrastructure, the application process, and rebate information continue to be difficult and complicated for accessing the wide range of residents that live in low-income communities, these programs will continue to be seen with distrust and as only structured for more economically advantaged communities.

## **Native American Environmental Protection Coalition (NAEPC)**

Nonprofit in Murrieta, Riverside County

Presenter: Jill Sherman-Warne, Executive Director

The Hoopa tribe is located in rural Northern California along the State Highway 96 corridor. Tribe members often deal with wildfire smoke and need home air filters. Furthermore, the winter road conditions are dangerous.

This tribe predominately generates revenue from logging and operates many diesel fuel heavy equipment logging trucks. The tribe has a fleet of trucks and other heavy industrial equipment in its timberlands.

Tribal members have eight EV charging stations for the community. These have been there for a little more than a year, but they do not work and are not a priority on the dilapidated utility system. Unfortunately, these chargers have not worked and need transformers to power them. The tribe was given money for these, but these will be impossible to use until the utilities can upgrade the system. The reservation powerlines are old and need an upgrade. These chargers are just sitting there unused and being vandalized.

If California is really going to achieve zero emissions by 2045, it has a tremendous amount of work to do for rural communities in California that have utility infrastructure that is broken and not modernized. The idea that communities will have charging stations is one she doesn't see happening unless they have these upgrades to the utility infrastructure.

Moreover, she sees that there is going to be a tremendous amount of harm to tribal communities that are in rural areas because they are being left out of the process. There are no EV vehicles being produced for the tribe's main industry, logging. They need four-wheel drive vehicles because of the weather conditions. California will never be able to achieve these goals unless the state looks at what the problems are. Those who are making the policy have little to no experience in rural lifestyles. There are so many infrastructure problems that rural communities face, that she feels that California needs to make an exemption for rural areas and specifically tribal areas. The poorer, overlooked communities are the ones being harmed the most.

## **Program Collaboration and Other Updates**

The addition of this section at the forum was intentional to demonstrate how the foundation had a California Air Resources Board program, as well as folks attending the event from CARB. Also in attendance was Access Clean California, which was representing a CARB program that is administered by GRID Alternatives and is a program that has done so much to change the clean mobility landscape. This section demonstrated how the foundation is working with different programs, not even within the same agency, to do this work because all stakeholders in this space should be working toward the same goal and leveraging resources collectively.

### **Access Clean California**

Presenter: Terea Macomber, director of clean mobility programs

### **Program Overview and Community Perspectives**

ACCess started as a pilot program 3.5 years ago originally named One-Stop-Shop Pilot Project and became a full program in the last round of funding. The program inception came out of the Senate Bill 350 Barriers Studies that were conducted by the CEC and CARB. Within both of those studies, it was recommended to have an all-inclusive site and comprehensive, coordinated outreach plans to ensure that affected communities were able to understand as

well as engage and apply for all of the climate benefits that are accessible to them. What ACCess aims to do is operationalize what was recommended in these barrier studies.

ACCess is a way to build coordinated outreach pipelines for communities to access climate benefits. The key program strategies for ACCess are 1) creating a streamlined, user-centered application process and 2) coordinating statewide outreach for programs. The first task for them has been to understand what the barriers are for applications and then finding a more streamlined way of doing it. A piece that sometimes gets forgotten is creating this coordinating this statewide outreach network, which is called their Outreach Partner Network. ACCess funds the CBO partners to do outreach while making sure there are a wide range of resources for these CBOs to use — this is known as its resource hub. They provide different materials including presentations, videos, flyers, and translated materials.

### **Application Process**

The ACCess Benefits Finder provides easy access to all programs in a single location. It serves as a streamlined, centralized application so that community members may apply once and receive many benefits and don't have to go through the same process repeatedly. Here Macomber also shared a video that highlights the basics of ACCess. The platform was developed using a user-centered design process, informed by feedback from community outreach partners.

### **Statewide Outreach Network**

The pilot started with four outreach partners and now has 22 outreach partners. This network consists of climate justice and equity partners, trusted CBOs, Native American communities and sovereign nations, as well as California's largest labor union. ACCess has built intentional relationships around the state with these various stakeholders to make sure they are able to support these outreach partners who have trusted relationships in their communities. Materials were informed by outreach partners asking for translation/languages.

### **What Communities Need — Centering Equity in Incentive Design and Implementation**

Another way to operationalize equity is to ensure that people are paid for sharing their stories and giving their time and for being a way to inform other community members. ACCess has around four testimonial videos and was able to provide \$250 stipends to the participants who shared their stories.

### **Feedback Themes From Outreach Network**

1. Program alignment and coordination
2. Coordinated and funded outreach
3. Program reliability and transparency (long-term, predictable funding)
4. Program creation and design should be informed by communities
5. Financial education and consumer protection

### **Communities in Charge**

Presenter: Martha Juarez, senior program manager, EV Charging Infrastructure

Grid Alternatives is a nonprofit that is committed to equity and inclusion and that strongly believes in a transition to renewable energy that includes everyone. The Communities in Charge (CIC) program is a California Energy Commission-funded project implemented through CALSTART, and Grid is the equity partner for this program. Grid works to ensure that under-resourced communities are included in this transition.

## Overview of Communities in Charge

The CIC is California's equity-first, light duty electrical vehicle infrastructure incentive project. This \$250 million incentive project was designed to equitably transform EV accessibility, rapidly catalyze new markets, and deploy EV chargers. The program provides financial incentives to accelerate deployment of Level 2 charging equipment while prioritizing equity through targeted outreach to "Community Connections." In addition, it focuses on technical assistance to support the development of charging infrastructure where communities live and gather. As the equity partner, it engages with community stakeholders to guide the incentive project design, implementation, and evaluation. The work that has been done so far has been engaging with CBOs, forming a focus group — of which IDEAL is a part — and helping inform the project incentive so that it can be designed in a way to guarantee that equity comes first.

The CIC seeks to meet community needs by providing targeted resources based on the readiness level of each project. "Ready to Partner" projects will be offered outreach and education to help them determine if the CIC will help meet their community needs. "Ready to Plan" projects will be provided with technical assistance to help guide them through the next steps for preparing for charging infrastructure. "Ready to Go" projects will be given the opportunity to apply for funding to help cover the cost for installation. The reality is that many communities are not ready yet, so the program tries to help during different stages to get communities ready.

The program was launched in September 2022 with additional launches every quarter. The program team hopes to improve upon each cycle by assessing if applications and implementations are meeting the project goals.

Martha closed by reiterating that everyone is here to fulfill the same goal and that they need to collaborate and work together for an equitable clean mobility ecosystem. Let's continue to share ideas and resources because it will only enrich these programs and make them more successful and helpful to those that need them most.

## Open Discussion

The final portion of the IDEAL Communities Forum included questions and answers and open discussion with guiding questions. Participants were asked to share any thoughts surrounding these prompts and speak to the realities/needs of their respective communities.

The open discussion question asked of community attendees was *"How has (in)access to transportation and mobility impacted the ability of your community to meet its own needs?"*

In response to this question, several attendees spoke to the barriers in their communities and expressed a need for more infrastructure to be built first because folks in their communities are worried about making the switch to EVs because there is no charging infrastructure in their communities. Another issue was raised around visibility for chargers — install them where they are visible and easy to find.

The question asked of any folks in attendance from state agencies or NGOs was *"How can you support communities and meet folks where they are at? How can you meet the needs that were expressed today and moving forward?"*

Perspectives from the lens of workforce development were also shared from a stakeholder supporting the electrical workers union who is also a journeyman electrician and

understands the opportunities available through apprenticeship, such as receiving free on-the-job training. They have been training apprentices since 2018 specifically for EV charging station installation and ensuring they are certified through the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP). Learning a trade cannot happen overnight; becoming a certified electrician in California takes five years of training. They recognize the growing demand for skilled workers to install EV charging stations and have been collaborating with organizations like Comité Civico del Valle (CCV), Grid Alternatives, and others in environmental justice communities to promote equal access to these opportunities. They have a full-time outreach coordinator who visits schools and community spaces to raise awareness about these apprenticeship opportunities and to ensure that students and community members from underserved areas know how to access and benefit from them.

# CHAPTER 6:

## Conclusion and Recommendations

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The innovative and intentional strategies implemented under the IDEAL Communities Partnership Project helped bring the Clean Transportation Program (CTP) closer to the goal of building a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible, and local clean transportation future in California. Many of the project lessons were heard and acted upon by the CTP in real time. Other recommendations will, understandably so, take time and effort to act upon. However, the success of the IDEAL project should elucidate the viability of what's possible when government remains curious and adaptable to the ever-changing needs of California's most impacted communities.

### Recommendations

#### **Intentionally Engage Specific Communities With Well-Documented Histories of Underinvestment and Disinvestment in Mobility and Transportation Resources**

The history of underinvestment, and at times disinvestment, in communities of color is essential to remember when making investment decisions.<sup>15</sup> Transportation systems and mobility resources were especially targeted with systematic and harmful disinvestment in cities across the country, including California.<sup>16</sup> Learning from this history means that investment strategies must be inclusive of the unique needs and challenges of communities that have not experienced proportional benefit from state and federal investments. In California, Black and Indigenous communities, as well as those who may identify as Hispanic should be prioritized in an effort to address gaps in transportation and mobility resources. Intentional engagement with communities that reflects an understanding of history, rather than an avoidance or ignorance of it, can go a long way in moving the needle on transportation and mobility inequities.

#### **Regularly Evaluate Restrictions and Requirements of Outreach and Engagement-Related Activities and Update When Needed**

Throughout the IDEAL project, various strategies for outreach and engagement were assessed, and some were also piloted. An inconsistent pattern was observed in the willingness to engage in certain activities. Some CTP projects did not offer incentives to participants of community feedback activities, while others did, which was reflective of a varying degree of limitations from project to project. Furthermore, concerns raised regarding incentives were centered on conflicts of interest despite no evidence or specific examples of such. Risk aversion is common among government agencies, and it is understandable to a degree. However, the CTP should regularly evaluate restrictions and requirements on community-

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15 Rothstein, Richard. 2018. *The Color of Law*. Liveright Publishing Corporation.

16 Taylor, D. E. 2014. *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility*. NYU Press; Rothstein, R. 2018. *The Color of Law*.

related activities to ensure that decisions are being made that are grounded in evidence and a reasonable level of risk aversion.

## **Encourage Participation in Community Outreach and Engagement Using Incentives**

Incentives for the participation of community-based organizations and community members in outreach and engagement activities should be regularly implemented with the funding for incentives accounted for in early project and program planning. The incentive itself does not always need to be monetary, either. Practitioners of community-based participatory models have defined several types of incentives, including purpose-driven, status, and material.<sup>17</sup>

Purpose-driven incentives are intrinsic and depend on the ability to communicate the broader impacts that result from a group or community member's participation. Status incentives are related to recognition and prestige, such as awards or titles given as a result of participation. Material incentives include monetary compensation which can be in the form of noncash "gift cards" or cash stipends. Intermediaries with capacity to track and account for material incentives can support these activities on behalf of the CTP.

There will likely be a cost associated with providing incentives regardless of type. In the case of purpose-driven and status incentives, costs may come from effectively communicating the purpose of one's participation in an activity or publicizing the award provided to a participating organization, respectively. Thus, proper planning should be made during the initial stages of any project or initiative to ensure that adequate funding is budgeted for incentives.

## **Create Accountability in Feedback and Evaluation**

When feedback is received but not used or when the results of an evaluation seem to go ignored, the trust in these processes is eroded. Accountability in feedback and evaluation processes involves honest and transparent communication at every stage. When feedback is sought, the purpose should be clearly communicated to those providing feedback.

Furthermore, government agencies should clearly communicate the way or ways in which feedback will be used or not used. This may not be feasible for larger feedback collection activities, like regular public comment periods. For other types of engagement, such as those related to community benefits, there should be accountable and transparent processes for how the feedback is collected, assessed, and incorporated.

## **Increased Coordination Between Related Investments, Including Intra-Agency, Interagency, State and Federal Programs**

Throughout the project, feedback was provided regarding better coordination between various clean mobility incentive programs. For example, funding timelines for medium- and heavy-duty ZEV charging infrastructure were not always aligned with longer time frames for vehicle purchasing incentives. Important processes, like key decision-making and application-related timelines, should account for other supplemental or otherwise related programs. Moreover, funding restrictions that prevent the stacking of funds for related investments should be assessed and evaluated. The reasoning behind such restrictions was not always clear for applicants and varied depending on the source. Such inconsistencies erode the support for

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17 Tang, C. C. 2005. [\*Enhancing Involvement in Community Planning Using Incentives\*](#). Bulletin, Stevens Point, WI: Center for Land Use Education, Retrieved from: <http://143.236>, 32.



investment programs by discouraging applicants who would stand to benefit most from multiple investments.

### **Invest in Youth and Young Adults for Sustained Impact**

One of the highlights of the IDEAL project was the student ambassador component, which received accolades from CEC staff, CARB staff, community partners, and the students themselves. Several students felt that their participation in the program gave them a new perspective and understanding of California's clean mobility efforts. At least two of the student ambassadors went on to pursue careers directly related to ZEV and clean mobility with one student applying for an IBEW apprenticeship to install EV chargers and another receiving a job offer from a nonprofit organization for a ZEV community outreach position. While kindergarten through high-school-age students were not engaged directly as part of this project, there are ongoing efforts throughout the state to advance ZEV and clean mobility-related awareness in early education. These efforts should be maintained, at minimum, and increased when possible.

### **Invest the Necessary Resources to Develop and Maintain Community Relationships Through Sustained and Flexible Funding for Outreach and Engagement, Internally and Externally**

Relationships of any kind require sustained, bidirectional engagement. Community-government relationships are no exception. Sustaining meaningful engagement with communities, including bidirectional and regular communication, requires resources. CTP should invest in internal capacity to manage these relationships when possible. While contracted outreach and engagement serves critical needs for state agencies, such as the CEC, sustained efforts are possible only with internal capacity and institutional knowledge that remains across time. For externally funded outreach and engagement activities, flexible funding and investment strategies are paramount to meet the dynamic and unique needs of community members.

# GLOSSARY

**ALTERNATING CURRENT (AC)** — Flow of electricity that constantly changes direction between positive and negative sides. Almost all power produced by electric utilities in the United States moves in current that shifts direction at a rate of 60 times per second.

**BATTERY-ELECTRIC VEHICLE (BEV)** — Also known as an “all-electric” vehicle (AEV), BEVs use energy that is stored in rechargeable battery packs. BEVs sustain their power through the batteries and therefore must be plugged into an external electricity source to recharge.

**CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD (CARB)** — The “clean air agency” in the government of California, whose main goals include attaining and maintaining healthy air quality, protecting the public from exposure to toxic air contaminants, and providing innovative approaches for complying with air pollution rules and regulations.

**CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION (CEC)** — The state agency established by the Warren-Alquist State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Act in 1974 (Public Resources Code, Sections 25000 et seq.) responsible for energy policy. The Energy Commission's five major areas of responsibilities are:

1. Forecasting future statewide energy needs.
2. Licensing power plants sufficient to meet those needs.
3. Promoting energy conservation and efficiency measures.
4. Developing renewable and alternative energy resources, including providing assistance to develop clean transportation fuels.
5. Planning for and directing state response to energy emergencies.

**Access Clean California** – A statewide program in California that helps low- to moderate-income residents access clean energy and transportation benefits.

**California Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project (CALeVIP)** – A state program that provides funding to install electric vehicle charging equipment in California. It’s run by California Energy Commission and implemented by Center for Sustainable Energy.

**CALSTART** – A national non-profit organization focused on accelerating the growth of the clean transportation industry.

**Carbon neutrality** - Achieving a balance where an individual, organization, or entity’s net greenhouse gas emissions are zero.

**Communities in Charge** – A program that incentivizes the installation of Level 2 electric vehicle charging infrastructure in California.

Disadvantaged Community — Communities within the top 25 percent scoring areas under CalEnviroScreen, as well as areas of high pollution and low population (such as ports).<sup>18</sup>

First 40 Initiative – A community-led effort by Comite Civico to install 40 publicly accessible EV chargers in Imperial County- California’s most underserved region for EV infrastructure.  
Foundation of California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) – A statewide nonprofit organization that serves as the official partner to the California Community Colleges, the largest higher education system in the US.

GRID Alternatives – A non-profit organization focused on making renewable energy technology and job training accessible to underserved communities.

Lithium Valley – A region in the California desert, particularly around Imperial County, recognized for its rich lithium deposits essential for batteries used in electric vehicles and clean energy technologies. It is a growing hub for sustainable mining and manufacturing aimed at supporting energy transition while promoting local economic development.

Making Hope Happen Foundation – A non-profit organization focused on improving the lives of residents in San Bernardino, California, particularly through education and community development.

Uplift San Bernardino – A collective impact initiative at the Making Hope Happen Foundation that aims to improve the quality of life and overall health of residents in San Bernardino.

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18 Tuggy, Benjamin. 2024. *2023–2024 Investment Plan Update for the Clean Transportation Program*. California Energy Commission. Publication Number: CEC-600-2023-029-CMF, pg. 56.

# **ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment I: Final Consultant Report - Task Two  
– Clean Transportation Assessment**

**Attachment II: Final Consultant Report - Task  
Three – Outreach and Engagement Plan**

Attachments are available as separate volumes,  
Publication Numbers CEC-600-20-002-ATI and CEC-600-  
20-002-ATII, respectively.