

## A Health-Centered Community Benefits Framework

- Acknowledges the integral and unifying role of health for achieving environmental justice, equitable development and human resilience.
- Preferences Community Benefits defined, negotiated, and administered by organized communities directly impacted by development projects.
- Emphasizes the primacy of Community Organizing, people impacted directly by an issue building their own power and expertise to address it themselves in partnership with others.
- Elevates directly impacted communities that establish representative mutual benefit organizations, and the knowledge-sharing, resources, tools, and technical assistance partnerships they need to effectively and sustainably represent themselves.
- Legitimizes the standing of Community Benefit expenditures and outcomes that measurably improve the Social Determinants of Health through strong, inclusive and accountable civic infrastructure in impacted communities.
- Results in fair and fast permitting of desirable development with maximum feasible Community Benefits.

- ❖ **A Health-Centered Community Benefits Framework** recognizes and reinforces the value of inclusively improving “The Social Determinants of Health” for all residents and workers, which can meaningfully unite diverse sectors, stakeholders and organizations to authentically work together and provide guidelines for Community Benefit expenditures and outcomes.



- Our individual, group and/or organizational goals, values and interests can divide or unite us in meeting critical present and future needs for all stakeholders.
  - The Social Determinants of Health is a uniting framework for shared goals and outcomes in our mutual social, economic and environmental improvement efforts. We reference the Federal Plan for Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (Federal Plan for ELTRR), which leverages the Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being as a guiding framework related to The Social Determinants of Health. We believe its integrative aspects anchored by “belonging and civic muscle” have broad and inclusive applications.
- ❖ **A Health-Centered Community Benefits Framework** does not preemptively or unilaterally define or advocate for precise types and exact dollar or percentage amounts of Community Benefits for the communities impacted by a diversity of distinct types and scales of new clean energy or other major developments. It honors and encourages the autonomy and actualization of community leaders to forge shared identity and effective agency to organize to do so (belonging and civic muscle) with thoughtful guidelines and a general framework that identifies key categories of health and well-being such as: Meaningful Work + Wealth, Lifelong Learning, Humane Housing, Reliable Transportation, Basic Needs for Health + Safety, and a Thriving Natural World. These categories encompass and can include a broad range of types and scales of specific, appropriate and possible cash and in-kind Community Benefits that organized communities themselves should understand, deliberate, and decide upon among themselves, and use to act together to negotiate with project developers. Suggested researched benchmarks for feasible benefits and other tools and technical assistance to organized communities to increase their effectiveness is highly desirable.
- ❖ **A Health-Centered Community Benefits Framework** should not be mutually exclusive or in conflict with city, county, regional and state efforts to define, regulate, collect and/or disperse resources exacted from new development as allowed by laws and rules regulating taxes, assessments, fees and charges. However, actions initiated and governed by these different governmental and regional intermediary organizational levels should not prevent or diminish the exercise of democratic agency and civic engagement by communities of impacted people to assert the initiative to build their own power and expertise to define, negotiate, secure and administer Community Benefits from new development for themselves. Ideally, governmental lead agencies should support the formation of non-governmental non-profits formed in, by and for impacted communities and work collaboratively with developers and these

NGOs to secure maximum feasible benefits desired projects. Impacted communities should have the highest priority for determining and receiving the maximum feasible Community Benefits possible to support their equitable health opportunities and circumstances, while supporting the fair and fast permitting of what they determine to be desirable development with enforceable environmental protections. City, county, regional and state efforts should emphasize expanding and focusing traditional government-funded efforts related to workforce and economic development, education, job training, healthcare, digital access/broadband, local and regional transportation, water and other utility infrastructure, affordable housing, and more, toward underserved impacted communities, and not substituting Community Benefits they could intervene to capture for their public funding responsibilities.

- ❖ **A Health-Centered Community Benefits Framework** related to the clean energy transition in our region should reference the strategic and inclusive “Guiding Principles for Community Benefits Related to Clean Energy Projects in the San Joaquin Valley,” Appendix A, Clean Air Task Force, April 2024 Report: **“An Exploration of Options and Opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley’s Clean Energy Future”**<sup>i</sup> inserted below.

## **Appendix A: Guiding Principles for Community Benefits Related to Clean Energy Projects in the San Joaquin Valley**

### **Preamble**

- Rural cities and communities will likely bear the brunt of negative impacts of the transition to clean energy in the SJV, and therefore should receive the greatest share of direct community benefits.
- California has a history of marginalizing SJV communities, relying on the Valley’s people and plentiful agricultural and energy resources to serve the “greater good.” These rural communities have not traditionally benefited from a hundred years of extractive industry (agricultural, solar, mining, oil, gas, etc.). Benefits and mitigations, exacted by government via CEQA or by other intermediary organizations, have not improved SJV communities’ socioeconomic status, health, and wellbeing.
- The clean energy industrial transition can provide SJV residents with community benefits –direct and indirect– that have the potential to transform these impacted communities and address historic injustices.

- Clarity and certainty around community benefits has potential to accelerate desired clean energy projects, which are those that are consistent with the SJV Clean Energy Vision Statement and Objectives. Strong community benefits mechanisms can lower impacts, costs, and risks associated with industrial scale clean energy deployment, attract investment, and deliver feasible, real, and durable benefits to impacted communities.
- Community benefits should be determined by the local impacted communities and should be the maximum feasible, so that desirable projects are still financially viable. While benefits from a single project cannot solve the challenges faced by communities, aggregated community benefits from multiple projects can have a substantial impact.
- Rural community prosperity will not happen without respect for, deference to, and engagement and empowerment of residents and leaders in impacted rural communities. Communities must be able to articulate their vision and objectives, be part of the examination and determination of the full suite of project impacts, and author their own community determined benefits packages including negotiated agreement(s).
- Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) will be required. To be meaningful and transformative, CBAs must ultimately be negotiated between energy developers and impacted rural community organizations that will determine, govern, and manage implementation of their community benefits. This CBA process can be assisted, streamlined, and made regionally consistent in various ways. However, the CBA process must emphasize building and sustaining rural community civic infrastructure with shared power and governance over high-capacity nonprofits intentionally established to hold and deploy their own hard earned rural community benefit resources.
- The authentic and measurable empowerment and self-determination work requires a commitment to intense and long-term rural community organizing, leadership development, and achievement of peer status for rural communities in all aspects of the clean energy transition along with government, markets, and the traditional nonprofit sector.

### **Guiding Principles for all SJV Clean Energy Projects**

- 1. Uniformity Across the Valley:** Community Benefits Plans and associated enforceable Community Benefit Agreements are a prerequisite for all clean

energy projects valley-wide; a consistent CBA approach across the valley will provide clarity for developers and prevent communities from competing against each other and losing benefits, or overburdening an area with development because it has fewer requirements.

This will require a several next steps beyond the report “An Exploration of Clean Energy Options and Opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley’s Clean Energy Future” including:

- Coordination of local governments to establish a regulatory framework for CBAs across the valley to provide clarification of the project’s costs and certainty about the process, participants, and feasible monetary and non-monetary benefits;
- Local government buy-in to a uniform approach valley-wide. This will include sharing mitigations and coordinating community benefits flowing from these projects with impacted community organizations.

**2. Inclusive:** Intentional inclusion of and capacity building for the most impacted rural communities is fundamental.

- Lead agencies typically foster community outreach through formal entitlement and planning processes. However, community led conversations have a broader and deeper reach and yield better results. Engagement processes in project development and CBA negotiation must begin from a place of learning, seek out underrepresented voices, and value community led discussions.
- Community benefits must include negotiated agreements, like CBAs, between project developers and impacted communities. Communities must be in a position to determine, govern, and manage implementation of their community benefits. Capacity building and technical assistance need to be fostered locally and with support from trusted experts and with state and federal assistance.

**3. Locally Controlled:** Benefits should be determined by local communities (in close coordination with local government) and benefits deployed by community-created and owned non-profit organizations.

- Responsibility for establishing non-profit organizations to receive funds and deploy benefits lies with the community. There are capacity and

funding challenges, but this approach is superior to the developer controlling the “table” and fundamental to securing the desired outcomes.

- Community 501(c)(3)s will be guided by the “social determinants of health” and receive revenue from projects and other sources (philanthropic, government grants, income from investing in local clean energy projects, etc.).

**4. Enforceable, Transparent, & Accountable:** CBAs shall be legally enforceable. CBAs should be transparent and made public, when possible, to ensure that all parties are held accountable for use of tax/community benefit investment dollars. CBAs shall include measurable goals and actions supported by the best available information, and mechanisms for citizens at large to ensure accountability.

**5. Co-Beneficial:** A standardized approach to CBAs in the SJV consistent with these principles will accelerate desirable clean energy projects necessary to mitigate climate impacts while also ensuring durable, meaningful, and community determined and deployed community benefits.

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<sup>i</sup> Clean Air Task Force, April 2024 Report “**An Exploration of Options and Opportunities for the San Joaquin Valley’s Clean Energy Future**” - <https://www.catf.us/resource/exploration-options-opportunities-san-joaquin-valley-clean-energy-future/>