

PRIORITY COMMUNITIES LEARNING SUMMIT

Summary Notes | January 17-18, 2024

On January 17-18, over 100 representatives from Priority Communities partnered from five communities (Fresno, Salinas, Stockton, Riverside, and San Bernardino) gathered in Los Angeles for the first in-person Learning Summit since the initiative launched in 2019. The goals for the summit were to support networking, relationship building, and learning across and within regions. The summit created space to explore the strategies, practices, and insights that support inclusive and resilient economies, with an emphasis on timely topics such as the future of work, leveraging public dollars, understanding impact, and strengthening the small business ecosystem. Material from various sessions and speakers are available for review [online](#).

What does it take to build an inclusive economy?

Here's what we learned...

A New Frame

A new economic frame where mutuality and movements create a sense of belonging, connectedness, and shift in power.

Understanding the impact of inclusive economic development efforts requires the intersection of data, research, trust-building, powerful storytelling, and new narratives to compete with the age of misinformation in the current political environment.

A focus on systems change efforts including narrative change, power building, civic engagement to influence policy.

Stronger Ecosystems and Inclusive Partnerships

Stronger ecosystems inclusive of diverse community partners are needed to inform economic development and drive equitable and innovative solutions.

Create authentic community partnerships to help inform decisions around the future of work, technology, climate change, including the infrastructure and training need to build workers' transferable skills for the jobs of the future.

Bolder Investments and Funding Strategies

Bolder investments (including risk capital) in targeted efforts that address racial disparities and move toward "economic liberation".

Invest in the small business ecosystem (which is a large proportion BIPOC) through culturally responsive TA supports and services, and more access to capital with a focus on ownership and building wealth.

Create stronger collaboratives to collectively unlock and leverage public dollars, as well as pool funds to strengthen BIPOC CBO ecosystems.

Day 1 Overview

Jessica Kaczmarek, Initiative Director of the Priority Communities (PC) initiative opened the event by welcoming the grantee partners, introducing the Irvine and [Engage R+D](#) team (learning and evaluation partner), and sharing the goals for the summit.



Grantee partners participated in a series of networking and relationship-building activities including an **ecosystem mapping activity**

where partners within each region shared about their role in their regional ecosystem. A second networking activity grouped grantee partners by key role (e.g., researchers, conveners, CBOs) from across the regions to promote cross-regional learning and networking.

Day one concluded with a full team-building activity, where [Kidbilly Music](#) ignited the groups' creativity to create a song entitled "[The Root of Change](#)" that highlights themes and shared experiences in the Priority Communities initiative.



Ecosystem mapping activity

Day 2 Overview

Opening Plenary



[Dr. Chris Benner](#), Director, [Institute for Social Transformation](#), University of California, Santa Cruz presented the framework from his most recent book (co-authored with Manuel Pastor) called [Solidarity Economics: Why Mutuality and Movements Matter](#) and discussed its relevance for creating inclusive local economies. Key takeaways from his [presentation](#) include:

- The solidarity economics framework highlights the importance of centering racial equity, place-based approaches, and role of social movements to shift power.
 - The dominant “individualist” economic paradigm and theory shapes policies, narratives, perceptions and actions, shapes institutions and social norms.
- We have an opportunity to change the story, by recognizing “our” economy is shaped and organized around people – not an abstract thing – but rather the result of relationships, power, and mutuality.
 - We must think about power and investing in movements – building solidarity across divides and differences to exercise mutuality rather than differences.
 - To advance the work, we first need to articulate the north star and have clear goals/objectives around production, protection, preservation, and policy.

- We must also think about language. For example, terms like a “safety net” vs a “social wage” – because guaranteed income is another way of talking about social wage. We need a new asset-based model developing with, not for communities, and we need to invest in systems development and social infrastructure.
- Dr. Benner and his team are building a series of reports on their website – the first of which is on housing in Monterrey. The next will look at public health.
- During Q&A attendees suggested a need to take a page from the book of environmental justice, to learn from historic movements and apply economic justice to advance our economy. Participants also underscored the need to make critical connections across public policy issues such as childcare and the economy.



Graphic illustrator Emily Shepard from Graphic Distillery captured and transformed the day's panel conversations and complex ideas into powerful visuals to inspire learning.

Spark Panel: Partnering to Advance Inclusive and Resilient Economies

Elizabeth Posey, Irvine Senior Program Officer for Salinas and Stockton, moderated a panel with representatives from across Priority Communities focused on what it takes to build a resilient and inclusive economy. Panelists shared about how regional partners are collaborating in new ways and implementing community-centered strategies.

Session Panelists

- **Fresno:** [Ashley Swearingin](#), CEO, Central Valley Community Foundation
- **Stockton:** [Ann Rogan](#), CEO, EDGE Collaborative



solutions.

- Cesar Lara from Salinas shared how the work at the [California Labor Federation](#) centers equality, inclusion, and systems. He suggests that we need to think about this as a glass half full and work together as Priority Communities. They seek to expand manufacturing in California and opportunities to create good jobs to move to “our economy,” not “the economy”. He noted that uncomfortable conversations need to happen, and the community needs to control who makes the decisions by running for office.

“Deep Dive” Panel Sessions

Attendees participated in two rounds of smaller breakout sessions focused on four topical areas: The Future of Work, Strengthening the Small Business Ecosystem, Leveraging Public Dollars, and Understanding Impact. All sessions embedded an ecosystem lens with a focus on community engagement and efforts to advance racial equity.

The Future of Work: Climate change, automation, AI, technology

This breakout explored challenges and opportunities related to the future of work, with a focus on building a resilient and people centered economy. This session highlighted collaborative efforts and partnerships striving to address some of the region’s most pressing issues.

Session Panelists (Round 1)

Inland Empire: [Joseph Williams](#), Founder, Youth Action Project (YAP)

Salinas: [Josh Metz](#), Executive Director and Co-Founder, Monterey Bay Drone, Automation, and Drone Technology ([DART Initiative](#))

Moderator: Nicole Pritchard, Program Officer, Priority Communities, San Bernardino, and Riverside (Inland Empire)



[Joseph Williams](#), Founder of the [Youth Action Project](#) (YAP) reflected on the most pressing issue or challenge in his community related to the future of work. He shared that their organization has a high road training partnership grant, and they are currently grappling with economic disparity for the Black community (8% representation in the economy) by exploring infrastructure pilot projects, and centering the experiences of Black workers. Their organization is currently developing a regional strategy to hire and retain Black workers. Joseph shared that they want an asset map of the workers and are working with Southern California Edison to look for transferable skills. He stated that workers and companies must get ready for the future of work. They are developing their first scenario of what the Black community will look like in the future, and they are trying to encourage companies to retain Black workers through several strategies.

[Josh Metz](#), Executive Director and Co-Founder, [Monterey Bay Drone, Automation, and Drone Technology \(DART\)](#) Initiative reflected on the most pressing issue or challenge in his community related to the future of work. He shared that the work in Monterey Bay started with a military base closure that impacted their economy. They asked the following questions: How can they shape future technology? How can their community participate in the future? Their current work is derived from their base for project use. They were also concerned about not having enough workers to keep the industry in their region. Josh discussed how they struggled with obtaining clarity regarding what industry needed and wanted. He shared that Liz Posey from Irvine then came and met with representatives from the company and discussed an apprenticeship program. The pilot served twenty-five people over the last year and has also developed an earn & learn program to help people access employment opportunities with JOBY Aviation. Irvine encouraged them to include other partners in the conversations and they have started to work on being more open to bringing the community on board. The most significant outcome is to secure a California Competes grant from the governor's office. They had an authentically community engaged project which led to stronger partnerships. (See this [presentation](#) for more information on DART)

Session Panelists (Round 2)

Fresno: [Geri Yang-Johnson](#), Senior Fellow for Climate Equity & Inclusive Green Economy, Central Valley Community Foundation

Stockton: [Dillon Delvo](#), Executive Director, Little Manila Rising

Moderator: Cheng Ung, Program Officer, Priority Communities (Salinas and Stockton)



Geri Yang-Johnson, Senior Fellow for Climate Equity & Inclusive Green Economy, [Central Valley Community Foundation](#) reflected on her role and organization along with what has been the biggest challenge related to the future of work. She suggested that communities of color need to make the shift to being owners. How can we have the infrastructure owned by the public and community? To do true climate and economic planning centered on the community, we must engage and plan with community from the start. Geri further reflected on where investments are made, who is benefiting, and how do we do this differently. We must get to the place of truth-telling about the community. With \$369 billion in infrastructure dollars, how many will be made in our communities? Geri laid out important questions to examine: How do we set our non-negotiables? How do we start applying pressure in appropriate ways? How do we go from sacrifice zones to community climate zones? How can we layer justice zones into our communities? What is the value? What is the impact? How can we ensure that a job in hydrogen, wind, or solar will be equivalent to the pay that “oil” provides? How can we minimize and disrupt the process? Finally, as we think about the future of work, Geri noted that it is hard to do workforce training for jobs that are not here yet.

[Dillon Delvo](#), Executive Director of [Little Manila Rising](#), reflected on his role and organization along with what has been the biggest challenge related to the future of work. He stated that the biggest threat is the language we are using which leads to erasure, and shared that people are also redefining words. For example, the use of the word “equity” without the discussion on reparatory work. As they define the term equity, the distance between the disparities they have is a deep chasm. We need to think about the issues, like great jobs, not good jobs. He talked about how Ethnic Studies coursework in the K12 system in their region allows students to enter institutions prepared to be passionate, but graduate and return with Amazon as their only employment opportunity. Dillon asked the audience to reflect on how we can invest and pay young people to be in the movement, recognizing that there is no value to social justice work in the mind of capitalists. He recommends that we fund organizations in ways that allow people who do social justice work to have access to benefits (ex. 401k) and focus on the root causes of inequity.

Strengthening the Small Business Ecosystem: A pathway to economic mobility for low-wage workers and entrepreneurs

This session explored the small business ecosystem in several regions as well as efforts to help support economic mobility through increased access to capital, resources, and business support. It will also explore how the small business sector can contribute to the creation of quality jobs.

Session Panelists (Round 1)

Fresno: [Cassandra Little](#), PhD, MSW, Executive Director and CEO, Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce

Salinas: [María Cadenas](#), MBA, Executive Director, Ventures

Moderator: Maria Aquino, Senior Program Officer, Priority Communities, Fresno



María Cadenas shared about the small business ecosystem in Salinas, including the work of [Ventures](#). She shared that the small business ecosystem is diverse and includes agriculture and services/tourism, but that there is a limited market for entrepreneurs. The major challenges are accessing capital and getting technical assistance, and it is difficult for small/micro businesses to medium sized businesses. Ventures is focused on co-ops, worker owned co-ops as a strategy towards building wealth, and provide culturally competent TA support for small businesses (e.g., accounting, legal, bookkeeping).

When reflecting more on the ecosystem itself, Maria shares that the ecosystem may appear robust, but not robust for BIPOC communities. She describes the ecosystem as a social contract that is not built for BIPOC workers because there is limited support for those who are bilingual. This reflects the need to think beyond accessing capital but thinking about how to develop small businesses with the appropriate TA. El Pajaro provides support, and there are some capital providers, but more is needed. Additionally, this requires a shift in narrative and shift in mindsets about how we think about building community

wealth and creating social goods vs an extractive, individual legacy mindset. Also recognizing that Latina women have the potential to hold a lot of power in this economy, and not investing in this group will hurt the entire economy. They are natural entrepreneurs but need more partners and support to become worker-owners. Maria further reflects on the model of Futuro, as a co-op of co-ops, which was created by the listening to community. They are currently seeking more funding and refining their model to integrate workforce development dollars into co-ops to maintain structure and create mixed status ownership.

Dr. Little describes the small business ecosystem in Fresno as remarkably diverse with hard working people, and businesses including Ag tech, retail, healthcare, and restaurants on carts. She shared that there are now more innovative ideas for small business, manufacturing and tech and a vast array of small businesses. She also shared the challenge of support for small businesses however, and described how the [Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce](#) created an accelerator to address licensing issues and connect them to external support (e.g., accounting services, legal, mentors, TA). Dr. Little describes the work of the Chamber as relational and uses a social work approach to help make connections for people. She also recognizes the impact of DRIVE in how that helped strengthen the ecosystem in Fresno, but still has room to grow, especially in terms of helping businesses access capital. Dr. Little noted how trauma informed care intersects with small business. That is, we need to understand the structural racism within systems and how BIPOC individuals show up differently in these spaces. BIPOC business owners need support through this trauma informed care frame, which also includes culturally competent training and a “warm hand off.” She shares some examples of collaborative efforts taking place, including the zoo, and Valley Farms. Dr Little ends with a push toward policy change to help address the challenges many small businesses owners face.

Session Panelists (Round 2)

Inland Empire: [Brian Kennedy](#), Entrepreneur Ecosystem Director, AmPac Business Capital

Salinas: [Carmen Herrera-Mansir](#), Executive Director, El Pájaro CDC

Moderator: Azusena Favela, Senior Program Officer, Priority Communities, San Bernardino, and Riverside



Brian Kennedy describes the small business ecosystem as “family business” at its core and describes the IE as a melting pot that comes from different regions. He describes the challenges in the ecosystem, including capital, coaching and community gaps. As a CDFI, [AmPac](#) supports micro-enterprises, connecting them with resources in the system. They are focusing on helping communities and entrepreneurs build wealth, specifically owning assets. However, he notes that business owners do not realize this wealth potential and hope to expose more people to the opportunity to own business real estate. When reflecting on the state of Black-owned businesses, he shares that there is still a great need for capital. Black

owned CDFIs have their challenges in addressing sustainability needs, noting that they must continue to raise funds to be able to provide loans. Creating and sustaining a loan reserve is a big challenge.

Carmen Herrera-Mansir describes the work [El Pajaro](#) has accomplished over the last 40 years. With a focus on creating wealth through small business and promoting equal access to economic opportunity, El Pajaro is helping to strengthen the small business ecosystem through the delivery of support services to entrepreneurs. They have helped Latino immigrant farm workers apply for loans and provide bilingual services such as coaching and TA. They have also helped create a network for farm workers to have greater access to capital. She described the need for a better ecosystem that includes learning more about the business side of things, including understanding credit and access to capital. Their approach is described as “meeting people where they are,” using a hands-on, high touch, culturally relevant approach that is based on community needs and culture. El Pajaro, who is on the path of becoming a CDFI, is creating incubator spaces as well as running an all-Spanish business conference. With the support of Irvine, they are now able to provide capital to clients that were previously denied capital. They created zero interest microloans for rural farm workers and are operating a kitchen co-working space that serves as hub for small farmers. Carmen shares that El Pajaro is now looking into “out of the box” solutions to support small businesses such as street vendors.

Leveraging Public Dollars: Building capacity within communities to compete and draw down funds for community-centered solutions.

In a time of unprecedented, increased public funding available at the state and federal levels to assist communities in a just transition of their local economies; prepare for climate change industries and jobs; and create more equity-centered economic opportunities, this session explored what it takes to build partnerships and local infrastructure to develop community-centered solutions competitive for funding.

Session Panelists (Round 1)

Inland Empire: [Hilary Jenks](#), Co-Executive Director, Inland Empire Labor Institute

Stockton: [Moses Zapien](#), CEO & President, San Joaquin Community Foundation

Salinas: [Maria Elena Manzo](#), Director, Mujeres En Acción

Moderator: Jessica Kaczmarek, Initiative Director, Priority Communities



Moses Zapien shared about the ways in which Stockton’s ecosystem has been able to grow due to the investment from Irvine and Sierra Community Foundation. [San Joaquin Community Foundation](#)

then was able to provide a pool of money to fund operational capacity for smaller organizations. There has been a high demand for funds. The most recent grant call received ninety-seven grant applications requesting \$4.5 million, but they were only able to award \$500,000. Once they get additional funding, they will regrant more money and have another funding opportunity to help boost organizational capacity, or hire additional staff. Moses emphasized the need to prioritize and support smaller nonprofits, and especially support organizations that are committed to racial and diversity inclusion, supporting BIPOC communities.

Hillary Jenks described the philanthropic environment and history in the Inland Empire, which constitutes Riverside and San Bernardino. Due to a lack of funds historically in the region, there has been a scarcity mindset in which organizations view one another as competition. As they work to build partnerships, there could be significant gaps and challenges trying to build connections. She detailed how the [Inland Labor Empire Institute](#) applied for CERF in competition with another coalition in the region. With the support of Irvine, the two groups actively participated in mediated discussions and led to a new partnership. This structured space allowed for difficult conversations to occur. While the two tables had different opinions and were not able to resolve all their differences, they were able to establish trust and start to break down the silos they were in. Hillary emphasized that the active mediation helped to successfully work towards receiving public dollars. She also encouraged partnerships with labor unions, worker centers, and including the perspectives of union and nonunion members to understand worker needs.

Maria Elena Manzo described the ways in which [Mujeres En Acción](#) was able to establish partnerships with JOBY Aviation and their work in [Salinas Inclusive Economic Development Initiative](#) (SIEDI). She described how their partnership with JOBY has been instrumental in hiring community members and ensuring that JOBY received funding to create jobs. Mujeres En Acción helps to bring in community members to speak on behalf of JOBY Aviation and in conversations with policymakers. She emphasized the importance of having community at the center of developing partnerships. Mujeres En Acción has been able to have active conversations with JOBY about having high paying jobs, partnering with state and local funding sources to create wraparound services, such as childcare. Maria emphasized 1) the importance of researching what is available, who is present in the ecosystem, and 2) actively having conversations with community members to understand their needs and where they may be disconnect between community members and employers.

Session Panelists (Round 2)

Fresno: [Artie Padilla](#), Director of DRIVE Initiatives, Central Valley Community Foundation

Salinas: [Jackie Cruz](#), VP of Advancement at Hartnell Community College and ED of Hartnell College Foundation

Stockton: [Sandy Paben](#), CEO, Renaissance Groups and Renaissance Educational Consultants / Executive Director, Community Technology Initiative

Moderator: Jessica Kaczmarek, Initiative Director, Priority Communities



Jackie Cruz detailed the work that [Hartnell College](#) was able to do with [Regions Rise Together](#) (RRT) and [SIEDI](#) (Salinas Inclusive Economic Development Initiative). She emphasized the ways in which it was important to involve community voices. She detailed how RRT provides an overarching plan with SIEDI providing a pragmatic way to help CBOs build capacity. She emphasized the need to work around racial equity and use it to ensure internal development of systems and institutions.

Artie Padilla described the philanthropic environment in Fresno and how [DRIVE](#) has been able to scale partnerships that have taken 20 years to build up. The importance of DRIVE was apparent because they knew the outcomes of not working together and working in silos. He described how DRIVE is a collection of fourteen different organizations, each with their own business plans. Each plan is an investable plan, even if it is not coming from state or federal funding. Plans can also be used to get investments from other foundations. The DRIVE infrastructure allowed Fresno to deepen their community-driven work, develop a race equity committee, develop a macro-strategy, and have resident's lead.

Sandy Paben detailed the ways in which they led community meetings to identify what was needed for residents to be able to access jobs. Community priorities centered around transportation, childcare, and housing. They pursued funding to address this need and piloted a car share service. She emphasized the need to build services and resources that community members ask for and they will come. This helped them to receive \$15 million in funding from the Department of Transportation and they are dedicating the funds for building infrastructure. They have opened a Green Economy Lab, a place for community and partners. She emphasized the need to keep searching for money and turning over every stone and be willing to adjust plans if community members say this is not what they want, especially given the long history of residents feeling lied to and scammed.

Understanding Impact: The role of research, narrative, and data to inform action.

With a focus on inclusive values and approaches, this session showcased how research, narrative, and data can bring community voices into policy, strategy, and impact assessment. We explored

challenges, opportunities, and strategies in leveraging community-based data and research for regional and state-level economic planning. These presentations generated rich discussion about intersection of data, research, trust-building in a world of disinformation, new narratives, and the power of storytelling.

Session Panelists (Round 1)

Fresno: [Christy Patch](#), Director of Collective Impact, Central Valley Community Foundation

Inland Empire: [Miriam Nieto](#), Co-Director, Just San Bernardino

Fresno: [Edward Flores](#), Faculty Director, UC Merced Community Labor Center

Moderator: Victor Garcia, Program Officer, Priority Communities, Fresno



Edward Flores, Faculty Director at the [UC Merced Community and Labor Center](#) shared about the center’s research and policy work, which builds on the strong history of labor organizing in the Central Valley. In 2020, they established their center to bring research-informed emphasis to labor organizing that improve the conditions and raise standards for ag workers, domestic workers, and other industries where workers do not have the same rights. It is the largest labor center serving a rural region in the US. It has four major areas of expertise: rural work, workplace health and safety, immigrant rights and the safety net, and high road economic development. The work of the center has informed a variety of policies to raise standards for the agriculture sector and has informed labor organizing strategies in other regions.

Miriam Nieto, Co-Director of [Just San Bernardino](#) (Inland Empire) shared about the development of the [People’s Plan](#) for an Inclusive Economy. This collaboration represents a range of organizations working in the areas of economic mobility, grassroots organizing and power building, community development and racial equity work, all striving to advance a just and inclusive economy in the region. Miriam noted the importance of putting community at the center of all this work – from gathering surveys to surface needs and priorities to working with organizers to build community power. The People’s Plan includes key components to guide their work including purposeful pathways, economic and environmental justice, and community benefits. Historically, they have been a siloed region competing for funding and pursuing different agendas. It has been a journey, but their collaborative efforts have been a huge shift. The People Plan has allowed them to coalesce around shared priorities and move forward together. She also shared [resources](#) from their work.

Christy Patch, PhD, Director of Collective Impact with [Fresno DRIVE](#). Christy oversees the impact and measurement efforts for the Fresno DRIVE Initiative and shared their values-driven approach and efforts to center racial equity, community, and authentic partnerships. In the last year, they have worked to bring more clarity and shared understanding to what all that means, how to assess progress and hold themselves accountable. She underscored the importance

of gathering data that can be used for storytelling and sharing stories of impact. She also shared the DRIVE Theory of Change, the foundation for what they are measuring as well as [examples of surveys](#) and data dictionaries they've developed based on an extensive review of the literature from a variety of fields. They are happy to share with other regions to use and/or adapt so others do not need to re-invent the wheel. They recently piloted the surveys and view them as conversation starters and seek to engage partners in interpreting and making sense of the data. Their approach is intentionally participatory and action oriented. They welcome feedback and invite others to access this information on their website. Looking ahead, they are connecting with communications teams to share stories of impact and tell a different story that shifts mental models and new ways of economic development work.

Session Panelists (Round 2)

Fresno: [Ana Padilla](#), Executive Director, UC Merced Community & Labor Center

Fresno: [Edward Flores](#), Faculty Director, UC Merced Community Labor Center

Inland Empire: [Graciela Moran](#), Associate Director of Policy & Community Engagement, Inland Empire Community Foundation

Salinas + CEMI CERF Regions: [Chris Benner](#), Director, Institute for Social Transformation, University of California, Santa Cruz

Moderator: Jennifer Ho, Deputy Director of Impact Assessment and Learning, Irvine Foundation



Edward Flores from [UC Merced Community and Labor Center](#) underscored the importance of lifting industry-wide standards that continue to undermine what would otherwise be good jobs. Public institutions of higher education have prioritized tenured faculty in business schools but not in the labor sector. The Center seeks to fill that gap and shed more light on the rights and priorities of workers. Their contribution to the public is to ensure not only better jobs, but equally important, better standards. Through their work on the farm workers health and wellbeing study, they have been able to inform key policy at the federal level which has led to a federally funded pilot program to raise standards for workers. That said, there has been industry backlash, and it is an ongoing battle.

Graciela Moran of the [Inland Empire Community Foundation](#) (IECF) shared her personal experience as a long-time resident and beneficiary of the work of IECF. She noted the work is impactful, but it has taken a lot to get where they are. She underscored the importance of acknowledging trauma and the need for healing in communities. She referenced the work of the [Cielo Fund](#), a Latino-led and serving organizations that contributes to the wellbeing of the IE. Through data and storytelling reports like *Aqui Estamos* (based on Census data) they are raising awareness to advocate for and drive change in their region. In addition to mobilizing community members, this work has also helped to harness additional state funding.

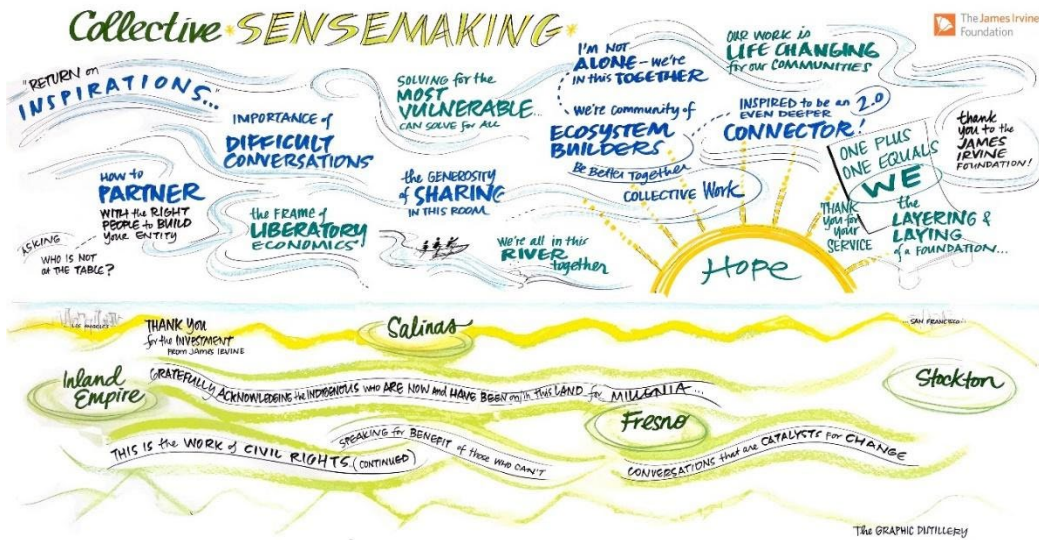
Dr. Chris Benner, UC Santa Cruz [Institute for Social Transformation](#) expanded on his earlier keynote presentation by ways research, data and narrative can shift the paradigm. Communities often get ignored by universities, which are built on the colonial roots of higher education and inhabit stolen land. In his experience, he has come to the work with that humility and recognizes the constant back and forth between learning from the experience of community and how economic theory drives our systems and behaviors. He referenced the report “[From Resistance to Renewal](#)” that was the impetus for Solidarity Economics. It is great to have a laundry list but what stitches it all together is the framework for solidarity and mutuality. It has inspired the work he has been doing in the Salinas region, including economic research to inspire work in Salinas and power mapping in the context of ecosystem of decision makers. An important part of this story is the importance of engaging community partners to identify the indicators they care about. It all needs to be connected to stories, narratives, issues, and actions that matter to communities.

The group discussed ideas inspired by the presentations, some of which were issue specific (like housing) as well as the utility of frameworks for multi-issue problem solving, like the *Vital Conditions* framework being used by IECF in the Inland Empire. Graciela (IECF) underscored the importance of shared language and multi-generational inclusion. Others talked about the need to agitate and open conversations using data. There is considerable backlash and backsliding in the current political environment and those who profit from the current and often unjust systems are pushing back and lobbying against the work we are trying to advance. How do we make sure we do not lose what we have won? How do we shift mindsets to move the moveable middle?



Final Reflection and Collective Sensemaking

The final reflection of the summit included key insights and learning shared from grantee partners across the Priority Communities regions. The largest theme from this conversation was gratitude. People shared appreciation for the investment and for bringing them together in this space for networking and connection, for investments in their community, and for framing the conversation around the larger ecosystem, economic liberation, and hope.



Special thanks to all Priority Communities partners for making this event a memorable learning experience!

