



CIVICWELL

Transforming Local Vision into Action

Formerly Local Government Commission (LGC)

2022 Mid-Year Snapshot

civicwell.org

CivicSpark Fellow Annie Wensley

CivicWell's impact continues to grow. Projects we lead or support are helping create safer, more equitable and climate-resilient communities every day.



Dear CivicWell members and friends,

This year has already brought a number of exciting changes to CivicWell, the first being our new name and brand! As we entered our 40th anniversary with an eye toward the future, we chose to share a deeper new story with a name that is broader, more equitable and inclusive, and open to all communities. We're proud of our history, and are excited to evolve our legacy as we begin our fifth decade.

In March, after 15 years with the organization, our CEO Kate Wright left to become the new Executive Director of Climate Mayors, and I was asked by the CivicWell Board of Directors to step in as the Interim CEO. I will be working with Azzani Search Consultants and a search committee comprised of staff and Board members to find our next leader to grow CivicWell and broaden our reach in communities throughout California and beyond.

As you'll see in this Mid-Year Snapshot, CivicWell's impact continues to grow. CivicSpark is full speed ahead with its expansion into Colorado and Washington, on track to engage 35 new partner organizations there. A new report we co-released on SGMA and Underrepresented Farmers is making waves. And projects we lead or support are helping create safer, more equitable and climate-resilient communities every day.

This year, CivicWell members will have access to even more benefits as we have revamped our membership program. One example is the new virtual Member Lunchtime Series, diving into recent projects—the planning process, implementation, and challenges faced—supporting members in bringing similar projects to your own communities. Please consider joining our network.

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathy Chow'.

Kathy Chow
Interim CEO

CivicSpark



CIVICSPARK MEETS IN-PERSON

In March, CivicSpark Fellows and staff took a moment to rest and reflect during the CivicSpark Mid-Year Retreat. Activities included curated screen-free activities, learning from resilience leaders Dr. Sarah Jaquette Ray and Ivory Chambeshi, and a "skillshares" series. Fellows and staff also met in regional groups for the first time since the pandemic started! Fellow Grant Sles reflected on the gathering:

"We got to connect with people who are dedicated to making our world a better place. I found that really refreshing after all this isolation and seeing so many unprecedented events unfold around us."



The San Luis Obispo regional group met at the Dallidet Adobe & Gardens

EXPANDING INTO COLORADO AND WASHINGTON STATE

In 2021, CivicSpark expanded its focus to include the climate resilience needs and interests of communities in Colorado and Washington. Local government agencies and nonprofits have welcomed the program's expansion with enthusiasm and excitement. After eight years in California, CivicSpark is excited to welcome CO and WA cohorts this Fall.



Jacqueleen Weeden and Alexa Kerr

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

At the City of La Mesa, CivicSpark Fellows Jacqueleen Weeden and Alexa Kerr are building capacity and answering the broader call in tackling climate change. "I believe our CivicSpark Fellows have helped us get to where we are today," says Hilary Ego, La Mesa Environmental Program Manager.

Jacqueleen and Alexa support La Mesa by assessing greenhouse gas emissions, rolling out composting programs, integrating environmental justice, and engaging the community.



Water

SGMA & SMALL FARMS REPORT

CivicWell recently released a report titled [SGMA and Underrepresented Farmers](#) along with Clean Water Action, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources, and the Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability. The report concludes that the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) has, so far, failed to adequately include small and underrepresented farmers.

Despite SGMA's mandate to consider the interests of all beneficial users of groundwater, research reveals that among the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies studied, few considered the impacts of their plans on farmers growing on smaller acreages, those with shallow wells, tenant farmers, and farmers from underserved communities.

The report has been featured in the [Los Angeles Times](#) and the sustainable food media outlet [Civil Eats](#).

BORREGO VALLEY STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CivicWell has been supporting the Borrego Valley Stewardship Council—a sustainability-focused community network focused on the character, resources and economic vitality of the Borrego Springs Community and Anza Borrego Desert State Park—with funding and direct assistance as they pursue formalization as an NGO. In April the BVSC voted to approve the organization's bylaws, and move forward with the incorporation process. This will be a major step toward becoming an independent organization. This move brings them one step closer to becoming the civic backbone of the region, and a strong voice for the community in planning and visioning.

GROUNDWATER LUNCH SERIES

In partnership with Maven's Notebook, we worked on the revamp of the [Groundwater Exchange website](#) to make it a launching pad for meaningful groundwater management, and improve the site's potential as the central hub of California groundwater information.

As part of these efforts, we developed an educational campaign titled Groundwater Exchange Lunch Series which has hosted a series of interactive webinars. These sessions offer a forum for Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), beneficial users, tribes, researchers, non-governmental groups, and community members to ask experts about Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation, and other groundwater related topics.

We have hosted eight sessions, reaching over 300 attendees and creating opportunities for stakeholders to connect and engage in meaningful conversations about the future of groundwater in California. Find session recordings [here](#).

Community Design



RICHMOND MOVES

CivicWell is part of the Statewide Administrator team selected by the Air Resources Board with CALSTART and the Shared Use Mobility Center to implement a program that funds local shared mobility (carshare, rideshare, bike and scooter share, and innovative transit) projects in disadvantaged communities.

The City of Richmond is the first to launch a project with funding from the program, with \$1 million to implement Richmond MOVES—the city’s first citywide, on-demand shuttle service in collaboration with Via. The three shared, plug-in hybrid electric shuttles provide a sustainable, demand-responsive, dynamically routed, microtransit service to bridge transportation gaps and provide connectivity between services and locations.

SAN FERNANDO SAFE AND ACTIVE STREETS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The San Fernando Safe and Active Streets Implementation Plan—created by CivicWell in collaboration with Toole Design, Public Health Advocates, and the City of San Fernando—was recently awarded a 2022 American Planning Association California Los Angeles Section Award under Neighborhood Planning.

The Implementation Plan expands upon initial recommendations from the City’s previous Safe and Active Streets plan, and provides a comprehensive implementation strategy—identifying priority projects to make streets safer and more comfortable for walking and bicycling. Through virtual meetings, socially-distanced walking and bicycling audits, pop-up community charrettes, and other efforts, the project team created awareness and invited community participation in the plan. The City is currently seeking funding from the State Active Transportation Program to build high priority projects.



A family participates in a bicycling audit as part of the San Fernando plan. Photo by Toole Design.

Climate Change & Energy

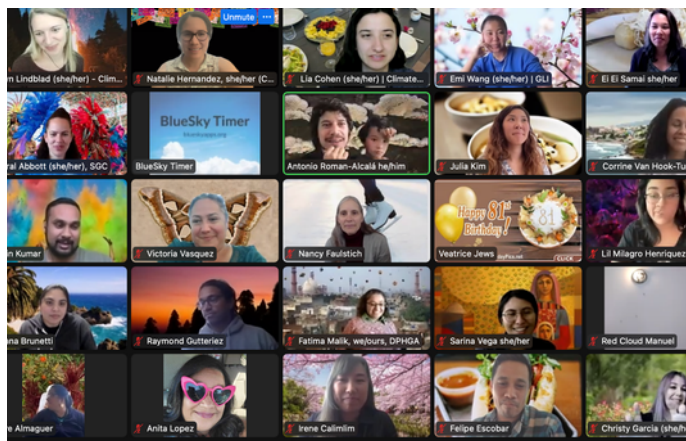
PARTNERS ADVANCING CLIMATE EQUITY

The PACE Pilot Program, a cohort-based program supporting 22 frontline community leaders across California in building capacity, was completed in March.

In the first quarter of 2022, CivicWell provided technical assistance to support participants in finalizing and socializing their Community Needs Assessments; building partnerships and coalitions; and continuing to build content knowledge, critical skills, and capacity to advance local climate equity solutions.

The pilot was a great success: participants reported higher levels of comprehension, skills, capacity, and confidence to advance their climate equity visions. And, over a dozen funding proposals influenced by their participation have already been awarded.

"Before PACE, we had \$0 because we did not have a fiscal sponsor or the confidence, capacity, or skills to apply for state grants. We have now received our first state grant and a few local grants and contracts as a result of this program."



The PACE cohort in its final session

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COALITION

LGSEC is a statewide coalition program whose members govern 65% of California's population and 62% of California's electrical energy demand.

So far in 2022, LGSEC began tracking and engaging in nine regulatory proceedings, and hosted a joint event with the California Climate and Energy Collaborative (CCEC) on building performance standards for 179 attendees.

In March, LGSEC published a Policy Platform to guide the Coalition's policy priorities for the next year, a key goal identified through its 2021-2023 Strategic Plan.

LGSEC will focus on building and transportation decarbonization; decentralized and resilient energy systems; and funding, financing, and affordability proceedings at the California Public Utilities Commission.

Read more about LGSEC's initiatives [in the news!](#)



Policy

CIVICWELL POLICY ENGAGEMENT GROWS

CivicWell has sponsored two bills this year. SB 852 by Senator Bill Dodd would allow local governments to form climate resilience districts to plan, finance, and implement adaptation and mitigation projects. The bill passed the Senate and is moving through Assembly committees. SB 1369 by Senator Bob Wieckowski would allow adaptive reuse for housing by right of underutilized commercial, office, public, and industrial buildings. Unfortunately, SB 1369 died in the Senate Governance and Finance Committee.

In addition to sponsoring the above bills, we took positions on more than 30 bills related to climate change, affordable housing, groundwater, transportation, and more. CivicWell Policy Director Roger Dickinson contributed to the shaping of some of these bills, and testified on behalf of several. We have also been active in the budget process, advocating for state funds for infill housing and transportation, adaptive reuse for housing, groundwater recharge, multibenefit land repurposing, and increased investment in climate adaptation strategies. We provide updates on their progress to subscribers of our weekly member-only Legislative Update email newsletter. Join our member network [here](#).

CIVICWELL IN THE MEDIA



NBC News

[California Town Leads the Electric Car Revolution](#)



CalMatters

[Use Cheaper Energy Rates to Galvanize Consumers Into Going Electric](#)



Los Angeles Times

[Will California's Central Valley Stop Sinking?](#)

Become a CivicWell member! Join our network of changemakers committed to creating healthy, equitable, climate-resilient communities. Members receive event discounts, exclusive webinars, resources, timely information about funding opportunities, and more.

Learn More and Sign Up

"The breadth of topics, experts, and connections with other local government officials made joining CivicWell an easy decision. Well worth it, immediately useful, and it's critical our rural voices are at the table for the challenges of today and tomorrow."

Jaron Brandon
Supervisor
Tuolumne County



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